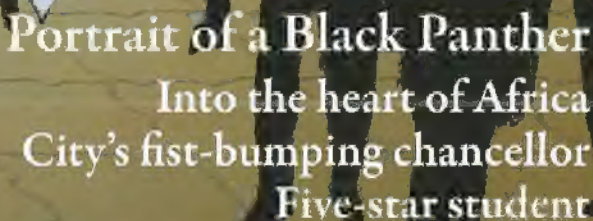


The cover of etc. MAGAZINE features a vibrant, stylized collage. At the top left, the title 'etc.' is in large, bold, lowercase letters, with 'MAGAZINE' in smaller, uppercase letters below it. The background is a mix of colors, including purple, orange, and yellow. In the upper right, there's a 'WELCOME TO Fabulous LAS VEGAS NEVADA' sign. Below it, a large, stylized face of a person with a red headband and a black beard is prominent. To the left of this face is a tall, thin tower. In the foreground, a man with a beard, wearing a white t-shirt and a blue bag, is walking. Behind him, a crowd of people is silhouetted against a bright background. The text 'CONFESSIONS OF A CASINO BANDIT' is written in a blue, outlined font inside a red-bordered box. At the bottom left, it says 'CITY COLLEGE OF SAN FRANCISCO' and 'SPRING 2009'. At the bottom right, there's a list of topics: 'Portrait of a Black Panther', 'Into the heart of Africa', 'City's fist-bumping chancellor', and 'Five-star student'.

# CONFESSIONS OF A CASINO BANDIT



**Portrait of a Black Panther**  
 Into the heart of Africa  
 City's fist-bumping chancellor  
 Five-star student

CITY COLLEGE OF SAN FRANCISCO  
SPRING 2009





## Three Great Reasons to Transfer to Mills

- It's Simple: No minimum number of credits required.  
 It's Flexible: No general education courses needed to transfer.  
 It's Fast: Guaranteed admission decision within two weeks.\*

Learn more about our small classes, distinguished faculty, generous financial aid, and scholarships. Call 800.87.MILLS for information.

# MILLS

MAKING THE WORLD MORE ...

5000 MacArthur Blvd., Oakland  
 admission@mills.edu • www.mills.edu

\*upon receipt of complete application



## ROXIE DELI

Custom-made sandwiches & deli trays

*A tiny corner market with a big Brooklyn feel right here in San Francisco.*

- Wine & Liquor
  - Lottery
  - Groceries
  - BART & Muni Passes
- Supporting  
City College sports  
for more than  
30 years**

1901 San Jose Ave. at San Juan • 500 Kirkham at 9<sup>th</sup> Ave.

## DEPARTMENT OF JOURNALISM

Fall 2009 Schedule of Classes

JOUR 19	Contemporary News Media			
	MWF	9:00-10:00 am	Ocean	Gonzales
	T	6:30-9:30 pm	Mission	Graham
JOUR 21	News Writing and Reporting			
	MWF	10:00-11:00 am	Ocean	Gonzales
	T	6:30-9:30 pm	LGBT	Rochmis
JOUR 22	Feature Writing			
	W	6:30-9:30 pm	Mission	Graham
	R	6:30-9:30 pm	Mission	Rochmis
JOUR 23	Electronic Copy Editing			
	M	6:30-9:30 pm	Mission	Rochmis
JOUR 24	Newspaper Laboratory			
	MWF	12:00-1:00 pm	Ocean	Gonzales
	Plus 4 hours lab by arrangement			
JOUR 25	Editorial Management			
	MWF	1:00-2:00 pm	Ocean	Gonzales
JOUR 29	Magazine Editing & Production			
	M	6:30-8:30 pm	Mission	Graham
	Plus 3 hours lab by arrangement			
JOUR 31	Internship Experience			
	Hours Arranged		Ocean	Gonzales
JOUR 37	Intro to Photojournalism			
	TR	9:30-11:00 am	Mission	Lifland
JOUR 38	Intermediate Photojournalism			
	W	6:30-9:30 pm	Mission	Lifland

[www.ccsf.edu/departments/journalism](http://www.ccsf.edu/departments/journalism)

## City College Bookstores

### One-stop shopping on campus

Alemany • Chinatown • Downtown • John Adams • Mission • Ocean

**Textbooks:** New & Used

**Supplies:** School, Art & General Office

### Bookstore Annex on Phelan Avenue

Computer Software

Sodas and Snacks

CCSF Logo Clothing • Hats & T-Shirts  
 Mugs & Sweatshirts  
 Backpacks & more

For more information please visit [ccsf.edu/bookstore](http://ccsf.edu/bookstore)

## City College of San Francisco





Photo by Michael P. Smith

## Editor's Note

As we began putting this issue of *Etc.* magazine together, we received good news. The Journalism Association of Community Colleges announced that we had won several awards in this year's statewide contest.

For the fifth year in a row, *Etc.* magazine was honored with the General Excellence Award – the top recognition bestowed on a publication.

For the Fall 2008 issue, Deia DeBrito took second place for her profile of Diamond Dave Whitaker ("City's Punk Hippie"). For illustrations, Simone Mitchell won fourth place ("Jumping Through Hoops"), and Luke Bair received honorable mention ("Greening of City").

For the Spring 2008 issue, Stephanie Rice took first place for her opinion piece ("*Letter From Cairo*"). Miles Harrigan won second place for his feature about *kink.com* ("*A Kink in the Armory*"). And Alex Dixon received honorable mention for his profile of Gibril Wilson ("*City's 'Super' Hero*").

Our current design director, Deanna Chan, received honorable mention for her layout of the Spring 2008 issue.

Our priority for this issue was to maintain this level of excellence. A theme quickly emerged. Change was in the air. A new president, a new chancellor, and a new magazine staff.

As we discussed story ideas, we found the life experiences of some of our staff newsworthy. These inside accounts give us a firsthand look at what it's like to witness a presidential inauguration... to travel through Africa, and the Himalayas... and to rob five casinos and five banks.

Every story has a connection to City College. It's the common thread to this magazine. Stories about students, faculty, staff and alumni on campus, in our community, and throughout the world.

Our new chancellor cast a spell on us. One of our alumni paints a picture for us of what it was like to be a Black Panther back in the day. Another's a haute chef in North Beach. A former county supervisor traces his career back to teaching ESL at City College.

And finally, we take a look at some smart, affordable gadgets that will help you ace your classes.

That's all. Turn the page and start reading.

— The Editor

## Letter to the Editor

Dear Editor: I've been meaning to write you to offer my compliments and to express my appreciation (for) the fine work you are doing (at) *Etc.* magazine. In every area, from content and layout through editing and print quality, the publication has taken a quantum leap forward. I occasionally see literary journals from Mills College, and other four-year institutions of some renown, and I would say that *Etc.* has achieved a level of excellence that puts it on par with the very best of student publications that I have seen anywhere.

I am sure that the magazine represents the care and hard work of many individuals. Please pass on my accolades to them all. You and your staff have demonstrated a commitment to quality, attention to detail, and a pride in craftsmanship to which many of us here at City College aspire, but too rarely achieve. It is inspiring. Thank you and congratulations.

All the Best,

David Parr

Instructor, Theatre Arts Department



This magazine is written,  
photographed, edited and  
designed by students of  
City College of San Francisco.

Cover illustration by Luke Bair



## Editor in Chief

Shinyung Oh • shinyungo@yahoo.com

## Managing Editor

Kristen Beck • kebeck81@yahoo.com

## Assistant Managing Editor

Patricia Decker • patriciasquared@gmail.com

## Chief Copy Editor

Hema Swami • hema2000\_us@yahoo.com

## Content Editor

Sarah M. Horn • sarahmhorn@gmail.com

## Photo Editor

Michael P. Smith • mpsmith05@yahoo.com

## Assistant Photo Editor

Brianna Kirby • briannakirby@kirbshots.com

## Design Directors

Deanna Chan • ydcdesign@gmail.com

Shirley Edwards • shirleyathorizons@yahoo.com

## Assistant Design Director

Leslie M. Ricker • leslievonricker@sbcglobal.net

## Illustrators

Luke Bair • luciousdesign@yahoo.com

Deanna Chan • ydcdesign@gmail.com

Helena B. Guiles • helena@babingtonarts.com

## Writers

Christopher Barranti • c.barranti@yahoo.com

Lynda Brommage • lyndabrommage@yahoo.com

Michael Condiff • condiff.michael@yahoo.com

Helena B. Guiles • helena@babingtonarts.com

Sarah M. Horn • sarahmhorn@gmail.com

Brianna N. Kirby • b\_kirbs@yahoo.com

Shinyung Oh • shinyungo@yahoo.com

Allan Palmer • apalmer415@yahoo.com

Brent Stephenson • stephenson.brent@gmail.com

## Photographers

Lynda Brommage • lyndabrommage@yahoo.com

Brianna Kirby • briannakirby@kirbshots.com

Amy M. Mackowski • mackling@yahoo.com

Max P. Mollring • hairliner@gmail.com

## Designers

Dimitrios U. Escobar • du\_escobar@yahoo.com

Helena B. Guiles • helena@babingtonarts.com

Christine U. Ogu • xtine2@hotmail.com

## Adviser

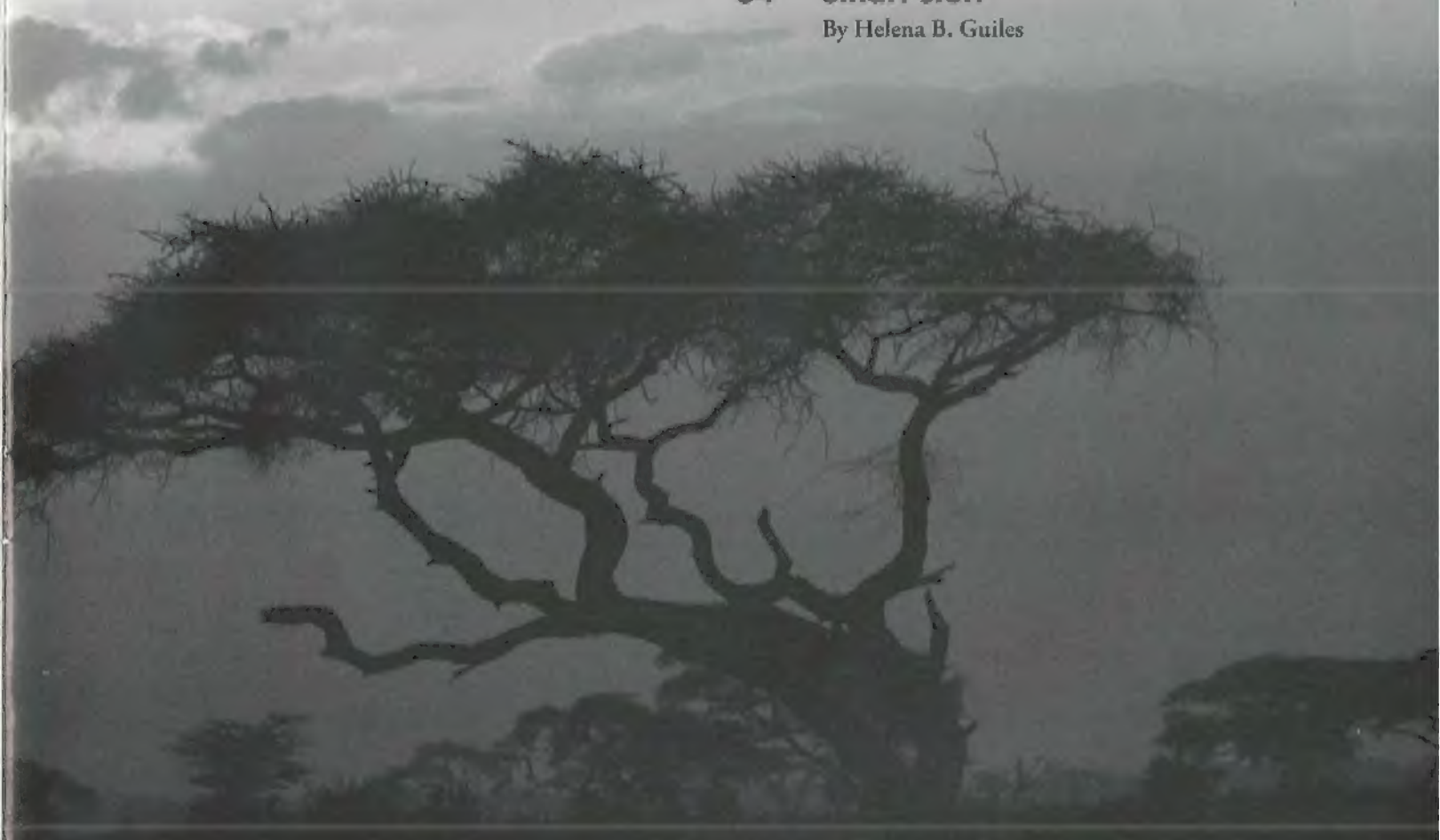
Tom Graham • tg\_journalist@comcast.net



# etc.

MAGAZINE

- 04**    **Confessions of a casino bandit**  
By Michael Condiff
- 08**    **Under the spell of a new chancellor**  
By Brent Stephenson
- 12**    **City's celebrity chef**  
By Sarah M. Horn
- 15**    **Into the heart of Africa**  
By Lynda Brommage
- 20**    **Illustrating a revolution**  
By Shinyung Oh
- 25**    **High in the Himalayas**  
By Brianna Kirby
- 30**    **Ticket to the inauguration**  
By Allan Palmer
- 32**    **Champion of the working class**  
By Christopher Barranti
- 34**    **Smart stuff**  
By Helena B. Guiles



An Acacia tree is silhouetted against an evening sky in Amboseli National Park, Kenya.

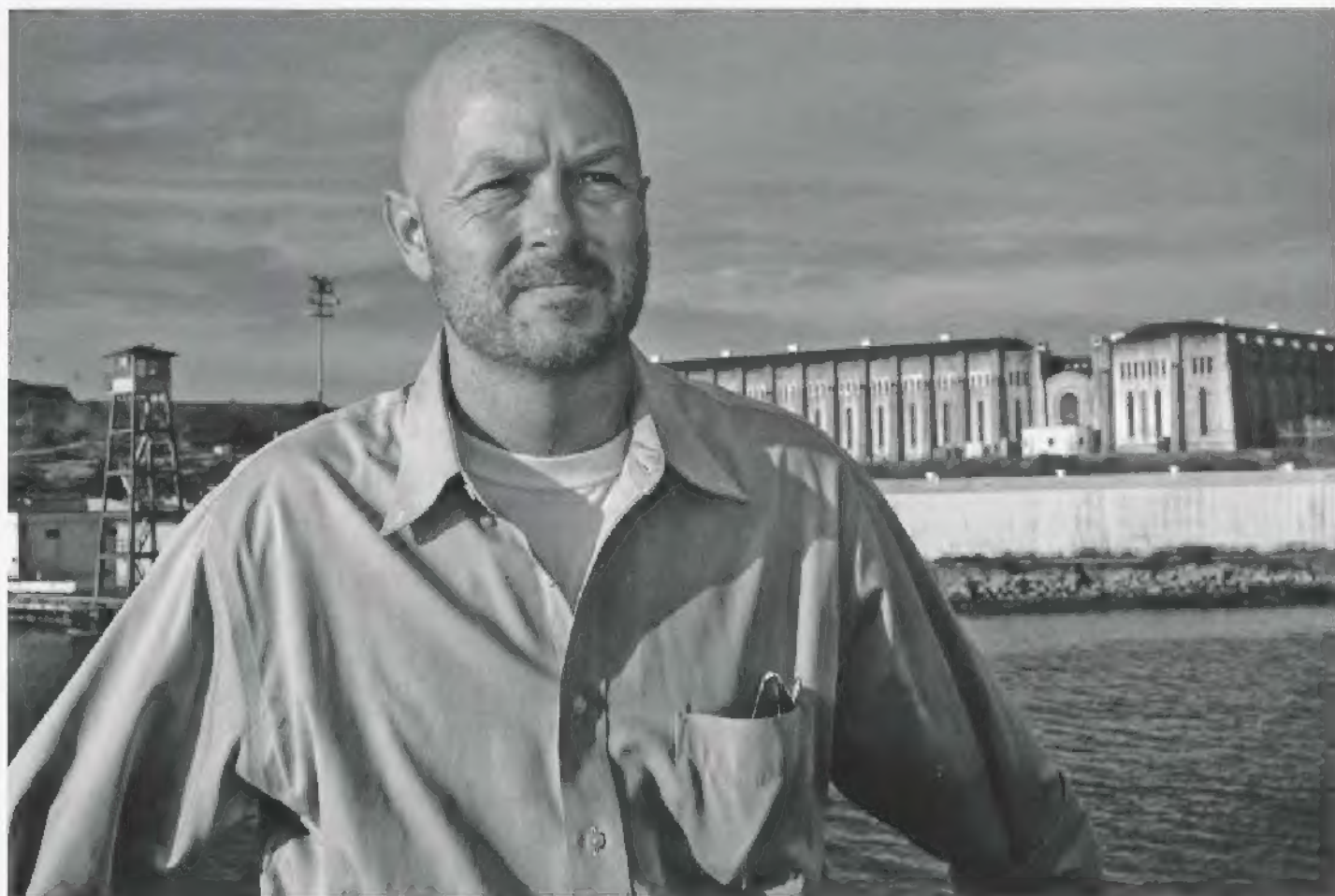


Photo by Michael P. Smith

The walls of San Quentin State Prison look different from the outside. From the deck of the Larkspur Ferry, former inmate Michael Condiff says you can't tell there are more than 6,000 inmates crowded inside.

# Confessions of a casino bandit

## A parolee's struggle after 13 years of incarceration

by Michael Condiff

**B**oom! The back door of the restaurant bursts open, and two police detectives, with weapons leveled, scream, "Get up and face the wall!"

I rise slowly from the break-room table — from the untouched flounder and sweet tea that was to be my pre-shift meal. A half-dozen of my co-workers recoil as their eyes swivel from the gleaming chrome of the detectives' guns to the targeted center of my chest.

They have no idea what this is about.

But I do.

I turn, face jammed against the spackled wall, hands and freedom jerked behind me.

It's over. I've been caught.

During a 60-day period in 1995, I robbed five casinos in Nevada, three banks in Texas and two more in California.

Fox TV's "America's Most Wanted" featured me several times as the Casino Bandit. During my crime spree, I had no sense the noose was tightening.

On Jan. 2, 1996, just minutes before I was to clock in as a waiter at the Red

Lobster in North Richland Hills, Texas, I was captured.

A few nights later, from the felony tank of the Tarrant County Jail in Fort Worth, I watched "America's Most Wanted" host, John Walsh, inform the nation that the Casino Bandit was facing more than 120 years in prison.

Some say my decline began when my mother died — two days before my 20th birthday. I don't necessarily believe that's true. But I don't discount it, either. Her death from a heart attack at age 44



left me with a great sense of urgency. I wanted everything now. Right now.

Instead of completing a journalism degree at the University of North Texas, I took a job as a sports writer for a small, suburban Dallas newspaper. Within a year, I had a wife. Within three, I had a daughter and son. And three separate career advancements.

There was something else: I had developed an addiction to gambling.

On our honeymoon in June of 1987, my wife and I stopped at a greyhound racetrack in Pensacola, Fla. We made two-dollar bets. It didn't matter whether we won or lost. She was happy either way.

But it infected me.

The notion that I could make money, right now, just by studying a race sheet and predicting a winner seemed fairly simple and appealed to my impulsive nature. Success or failure was determined in 20 to 30 seconds. Either way, there was an opportunity to test your mettle again within 10 minutes.

By the time my son was born in 1990, my habit was in full bloom. Two or three times a week, I would tell my wife I was going to cover a sporting event. In reality, I would drive three hours from Dallas to the thoroughbred racetracks in Shreveport, La., or Oklahoma City. I knew I was going to hell, but I could not stop. Sometimes the lying got to me and I'd break down.

When I'd leave, often having lost everything in my wallet but the gas money to get home, I would promise myself I'd never go back. That oath would last for about the first 60 miles. But by the time I got back home, I already had a plan of attack for my next venture.

As it turned out, my wife knew what was going on. One night, she sat next to me at the foot of our bed and said, "How can you risk your family's security like this?" I had no answer.

It should have come as no surprise when she checked out of the marriage a year later. But I fell apart just the same.

From 1991 to 1995, I held 14 different jobs — four of them as a newspaper editor. I quit each one once I thought I had enough money to hit the racetrack again. But it was never enough.

As the night auditor of a motel near the Dallas/Fort Worth airport, I slinked off in the middle of the night with everything in the till. I also cleaned out the safe. Within 48 hours, I had gambled it all — and lost.

The owner told me I could come back to work if I paid him back a little out of each paycheck, but he said he would break my legs if the register came up so much as a dollar short.

Two nights later, I cleaned him out again.

Within a week, I was broke in San Marcos, Texas. The late-night news reported a story about a man who had robbed several banks in Florida, using only a hand-written note.

The next day I robbed my first bank.

I'm in the bank parking lot for an hour drafting robbery notes. "I have a gun — please don't make me use it... Give

been through this before. She scans the note quickly and looks at me with the disappointment of a mother catching her son watching porn.

She calmly pushes a stack of bills toward me, then watches me grab it and run for the door.

Leaping a rail in front of the bank, I reach the unlocked car and toss the cash onto the floorboard, uncounted. Maneuvering through the shopping mall parking lot in a borrowed little Ford Fiesta, I turn onto Interstate 35 heading out of Austin. The afternoon traffic is heavy on a get-away Friday.

I hear sirens and they're getting closer. Then, I see the flashing lights. But they're on the other side of the median. They fly past. I pull off and tuck the car behind a Chili's.

My heart is thumping like a lawnmower.

The take is about \$1,300, which I

## During a 60-day period in 1995, the casino bandit robbed five casinos in Nevada, three banks in Texas and two more in California.

me all the money in the drawer or I'll start shooting..." Things of that nature. Being a writer, I'm concerned about punctuation and grammar. I've never done anything like this before.

The bank teller, a Hispanic woman in her early 20s, is pretty. Her sky-colored eyes are misting. Her lips are trembling.

She whispers, "I don't have any money."

With my right hand on the toy cap gun that's tucked into the waistband of my jeans, I can't believe my luck.

Here I am, balding at 29, in a sweat-shirt that should have been thrown out long ago, feeling dry-mouthed and despondent in front of this frightened girl.

She slides open a drawer to show me and it's nearly empty. A few loose bills, nothing more. I'm panicking now.

I snatch the note from the counter, step quickly to the left, and nudge a guy out of the way to get to the next available teller.

She's older, prim, and probably has

lose in less than two days. On Monday morning, I hit another bank in Hurst, just outside Dallas. The teller hands me several bundles of cash, but slips in a little surprise.

Outside, as I'm jogging to my car, I hear a pop, like a balloon bursting. Suddenly my right hand feels like it's on fire, and there's thick, rose-colored smoke billowing through my fingers. An explosive dye pack has just gone off inside the bundle of money, and it's burning my flesh.

The heat's too much. I drop the cash. The bills peel off and flutter away in a pink breeze.

At a nearby McDonald's, I dash into the restroom and run cold water over my hand, which is dark red and blistered. Hurting and angry, I drive up the road a few miles to a bank in Irving, near the Cowboys' stadium, and pass another robbery note. This time, the haul is about \$2,500. No dye packs.

After robbing two banks in one morn-

ing, I need to get out of town. At the Love Field Airport in Dallas, I notice a flight leaving soon for Las Vegas, a place I've never been.

Within a week, I'm tapped. At the San Remo casino, I rob a cashier's cage. The teller hands me approximately \$7,500 in cash. I sprint through the casino lobby, out the double glass doors and back to my room at the Motel 6 next door. I change shirts quickly, slap on a Dallas Stars cap and head back outside in time to see cop cars surrounding the San Remo. I walk right past them and cross East Tropicana Avenue to the MGM Grand.

The next morning, I fly to Reno. I like that it's much smaller than Vegas. But Reno doesn't like me. In a few days, I'm broke again and rob Fitzgeralds Casino downtown. It's a smaller casino, but the take is bigger — about \$10,000. I walk calmly to the door. Once outside, though, I sprint through an empty alley back to my room at the Steamboat Motel, three blocks away. I stash most of the cash in a tissue box and head back out to play craps at the Silver Legacy.

Back in Vegas, I have a good week playing the ponies. I know there are two racetracks in the Bay Area, so I hop a flight to Oakland. It's a \$100 cab ride to Bay Meadows, where I lose everything I won the week before. After the money runs dry, I tell a cab driver I need to make a withdrawal from the bank on the way to the airport. My unsuspecting get-away driver parks behind two adjacent banks near the Hillsdale Shopping Center. I walk in the back door of one, out the front, turn left and into the front door of the neighboring bank. I pass my note, collect the cash and retrace my steps.

By noon the same day, I'm back in Reno. By midnight, I'm broke. I hit the Silver Legacy for 10 grand. At the Santa Anita racetrack in Southern California, I go broke again. I rob another bank in Arcadia. Another dye pack goes off, but this time I quickly separate it from most of the cash and keep it away from my skin. Back in Vegas, I go broke. I rob Harrah's on the strip. I fly to New Orleans and then to Louisville and then back to Vegas. I go broke.

At the Westward Ho casino, a tired-looking cashier in her mid-40s glances at the note I hand her and refuses to give me anything. Looking me dead in the eye, she basically tells me to fuck off.

I tell her I'm serious. She says: "So am I."

As I turn around and walk out, I expect alarms to go off. But, none do. And no one chases me.

A day later, after eating a piece of coconut-cream pie at



At the California State Prison in Susanville last Christmas, Condiff was three weeks from release. In all, he served 13 years and two days.

Denny's, I scribble a robbery note on the back of the check and hand it to the cashier.

When he tries to give me everything in the till, I tell him I only want \$100 — enough to get a bus ticket back to Dallas.

I move in with my father as the holidays approach. Within two weeks I land a job as a waiter at Red Lobster. Weeks go by, and no one knocks at the door looking for me. I begin to think, "Did I get away with that?"

Christmas comes, and I spend the day with my 7-year-old daughter and 5-year-old son, whom I haven't seen in a couple months. All the money that passed through my hands, and I have a hard time scraping together a few cheap presents for them. The guilt is overwhelming.

A week later, someone watching "America's Most Wanted" recognizes me on a casino security video and calls in a tip. The authorities take less than 48 hours to track me down. After another losing day at the track, the restaurant door bursts open and they come for me.

In the end, John Walsh's 120-year

prediction was way off.

After convictions in four separate jurisdictions — Texas, Nevada, California and federal — I was incarcerated for 13 years and two days.

I served time in 13 penitentiaries and six jails.

I went before five different judges, and crossed the country four times shackled in the back of an extradition van.

I saw men get their throats cut, men get stabbed, a man beaten to death with softball bats, guys assaulted with cans of mackerel stuffed into sweat socks, thumped with mop ringers, bashed with television sets. I heard the scream and then the thud of a man being thrown off the fourth tier of a cell block at San Quentin. I heard the plea of a man about to be raped.

I worked the fields in unbearable Texas heat, where boss-men (and women) train their horses to bite you on the shoulder if you're working too slow.

I survived 15 months at the maximum security U.S. Penitentiary in Beaumont, where life sentences were common, and most inmates had nothing left to lose. This was the place I wasn't sure I would leave alive. But I did.

Next came eight years at a desolate outpost in the Nevada desert. Here, time slid by. I turned 35 and then 40. I watched men get released and then watched them return. I met men who will never be released, who will never have a second chance, and it bothered me because I knew one day I would go free, and the space between our worlds was razor thin.



And then, finally, I came to California — to the massive concrete cellblocks of run down San Quentin. There's no more disgusting place in the world than the West Block. Piss stained, rodent infested, crowded. Nine hundred guys screaming at the top of their lungs. Showers for two minutes, three times a week. With the exception of breakfast and dinner, you're locked down 24-hours-a-day.

From San Quentin, I was transferred to a racially divided yard at the California Correctional Center in Susanville, where I was released five months ago.

Today, I live in a halfway house, right in the heart of the Tenderloin. "Halfway" best describes it because the tenants are only part-free. There are rules and there are curfews. Violations could land you out on the street. Or back in prison.

And I will not go back to prison.

I'm under dual supervision — three years parole from the State of California, three years probation from the Feds. If they ask me to hop on one leg, I hop. My conditions of release require weekly therapy sessions, with an emphasis on the gambling addiction. So far, so good.

It's been 22 years since I've been a full-time student. With the support of the Second Chance Program here at City Col-

lege, I hope to nail down that elusive journalism degree.

Overall, though, the adjustment has been difficult. The world has changed. I have changed. Thirteen years is a long time to be institutionalized.

Sometimes I get thrown off by little things. If I don't work out every day — a must on the inside if you have any hope of survival — I feel out of sorts. At 4 o'clock, which is cellblock count time in the penitentiary, I have a sense there's somewhere I should be. Technology and the Internet — which have changed so much since I was arrested — frustrate me.

And then there are the two kids I haven't seen since that Christmas Day a week before I was arrested. They're young adults now — and complete strangers. I look at their pictures on this Facebook thing and feel like I'm invading their privacy. Our conversations on the phone carry no spark. It's sad.

Keeping busy helps me cope. In the mornings, I'm an adult education tutor through the Federal Work Study Program. In the afternoons, I look for full-time work.

There isn't much call for former sports writers turned Casino Bandits. It's hard to explain a 13-year lapse in your work history. It's harder still to say, "trust me."

I'm sure it's even harder to do.

**Michael Condiff** • [condiff.michael@yahoo.com](mailto:condiff.michael@yahoo.com)



Photo by Max P. Mollring

Condiff, who is an adult education tutor at City College's Gough campus, searches for full-time work in the afternoon.



Photo by Michael P. Smith

Chancellor Don Q. Griffin presides over City College, the nation's largest community college.

# Under the spell of the chancellor

Students, faculty and staff are psyched about Don Q. Griffin

by Brent Stephenson

**B**orn in Wichita Falls, Texas, on July 6, 1942, Don Q. Griffin was the 10th child in a family of 18 kids. His mother, who grew up in Oklahoma as an only child, wanted a big family. His father, from Mississippi, had 22 brothers and sisters.

"I guess my father met the right girl," Griffin says, his gray moustache spreading thin as he smiles.

As a teen, Griffin farmed the Central Valley. As a graduate student, he ran with Bobby Seale and Huey Newton — before they founded the Black Panther Party.

Before becoming chancellor of City College — he practiced hypnotherapy. He counseled murderers.

He loved it all, calling his work as a psychologist "seductive." But one day a

stranger asked what he did for a living.

He told her he had two careers, one as a professor and the other as a psychologist. She replied that he was cheating one of them.

He made a decision. He went with City College. During his three decades as a psychology instructor here, he taught more than 10,000 students.

Like President Barack Obama, he's inherited an institution with pounding financial headaches.

He runs one of the largest community colleges in the nation. With an enrollment of more than 100,000 students on a dozen campuses scattered around the city, Griffin presides over an annual budget of more than \$160 million.

He can crunch numbers, but he's

really a people person. With a Ph.D. in psychology, he knows what makes people tick. After an interview, he smiles broadly and dispatches some visitors with a fist bump. Students, faculty and staff who spend time with him are impressed. Were they hypnotized?

After 40 years here — 27 as an instructor and the last 16 as an administrator — he must have some insight into how to run this place. When Griffin, who is 66, first started at City College, eight-year-old Barack Obama was working on his multiplication tables.

Griffin was hired in the fall of 1969 to teach psychology. At the age of 27, he said he felt like he'd died and gone to heaven. A couple of months earlier, Neil Armstrong had walked on the moon.



Today, Griffin splits his time between two homes. During the week, he stays in his 33rd floor SOMA condo, overlooking AT&T Park, Mission Bay, Twin Peaks and the Golden Gate Bridge. On weekends, he travels across the bay to his Lake Merritt house. His second wife, Min, is an ESL teacher at City College who moved here from Shanghai 20 years ago.

Griffin has two children from his first marriage — Eileen, 44, and Quincy, 40. Eileen, a stay-at-home mother of five, has returned to school to finish her anthropology degree at UC Berkeley. Quincy, a successful musician and producer, has two children, and also lives in the Bay Area.

Being chancellor of City College is a demanding job. Griffin's day begins at sunrise and ends after dark. His 70- to 80-hour workweek often cuts into the weekend.

At the end of another long day, Griffin is trying to find the keys to his BMW. It's nine o'clock, and all he wants to do is go home to his two bedroom condo. He scours his office, retracing some of his steps. But he can't find them.

Standing outside his office near the corner of Phelan and Ocean avenues, with the interview over, he says goodbye with his knuckles.

He winds up taking BART home.

## Q & A

**The following interview reveals that Griffin is more than just some suit in a fake wood frame hanging crooked in a campus hallway.**

**Etc. Magazine:** What does the "Q" stand for?

**Chancellor Don Q. Griffin:** Quincy. My mother went to the movies when she was pregnant with me and saw this actor whose middle initial was Q. She liked the Q and later picked Quincy. I don't even know who the actor was. But it's probably the favorite part of my name. I named my son Quincy, after all.

**Etc.:** Where did you grow up?

**Griffin:** I was born in Texas, but grew up in Tulsa, Oklahoma. It was

fully segregated at the time. And the community was very close. The school principal lived down the street and the police officer across the street. Most of my classmates and teachers were also in the neighborhood. At the age of eight, my family moved to Pasadena. Then, in the eighth grade, we moved to Le Moore, in the San Joaquin Valley. You won't believe this, but the movie theatre in Le Moore was segregated. And that was 1955.

**Etc.:** What was it like living with 17 brothers and sisters?

**Griffin:** Diplomacy actually ruled our house. With very large families, you tend to get two, three or four clusters of siblings. And they're almost like foreign

**Griffin was hired in the fall of 1969 to teach psychology here. At the age of 27, he said he felt like he'd died and gone to heaven. A couple of months earlier, Neil Armstrong walked on the moon.**

countries. Usually, there are not a lot of wars because the oldest group is dominant over the others. They could beat the hell out of you if they wanted to, sure. Or they can be protective. Mainly, they just ignore you.

**Etc.:** Who or what were your biggest influences as a young person?

**Griffin:** My parents. We were a strong religious family. They taught me to treat everyone — no matter whom — with respect. That was very important to me. I worked a lot with my father on the weekends. I spent enough time to know that I did not want to do his work, but also enough to really appreciate his value structure. I also spent a lot of time with my mother on the weekends in church. I didn't stick with that after a certain age, but it was very influential.

**Etc.:** Do you consider yourself religious?

**Griffin:** Do I regularly attend church? No. Do I have a relationship with God? Yes, absolutely. But my mother would say I have to work on it.

**Etc.:** What did your parents do?

**Griffin:** My father came from a family of sharecroppers in Mississippi. He left home when his parents passed away at age 10. He only had three years of formal education and was on his own. It was 1918, so it wasn't uncommon for someone to be on their own at such a young age. He worked in the steel foundry, the oil fields and as an agricultural worker. He's turning 101 later this year. My mother, as you can imagine with all those kids, was a homemaker.

**Etc.:** When did you leave home?

**Griffin:** I left home at the age of 17 to work in a farm labor camp. I still finished my last year of high school. I would leave at six to go work. I wouldn't get back until six the next morning to

go to school. It was a good experience because I got to meet a lot of people from different states. They were mostly Southerners. They had really different attitudes about work, about having fun, about everything. And here I was on this completely different track. I was already accepted to Berkeley. And these guys were living very exciting lives, very different. I saw a man shoot another man on a date.

**Etc.:** What did your family and friends think of your Berkeley plans?

**Griffin:** Before I was accepted, I had an older brother who told me it was a ridiculous idea. He said they were never going to accept me. My favorite teacher was my Latin teacher and she told me that there are a lot of smart people at Berkeley and that I probably shouldn't apply. I was her top student. You understand this is a long time ago — 1959 or '60.

**Etc.:** You eventually completed three degrees in psychology. What first attracted you to the field?

**Griffin:** Mental illness. I observed it

at a very young age. I knew a neighbor who committed suicide. I was talking to him just like I'm talking to you and he didn't seem very happy. I was very interested in him because I didn't understand.

**Etc.:** Were you always interested in psychology?

**Griffin:** My original interest was in the physical world. I was a physics major my first year at Berkeley. And I went from physics to chemistry to math and then to psychology. The more I thought about it, and the more I observed things, the more I became interested in psychology. I learned the thing I'm most interested in is people.

**Etc.:** Did you get involved with demonstrations or protests in the '60s?

**Griffin:** I was very active in a lot of civil rights issues. At San Francisco State, I was active in trying to make the university open to students of color. In 1969, I was part of the massive arrests at San Francisco State. I was acquitted later on. I had been arrested and involved with civil rights stuff in the mid '60s, too. I kind of made up my mind that that would be the end of the road for me with things that would lead to arrests.

**Etc.:** Did you know any prominent activists at the time?

**Griffin:** Yeah, Bobby Seale and Huey Newton were friends of mine. As college students, we worked together on an after school education program. We thought it was a novel idea. We would go into deprived areas and recruit high school students to work with elementary students. We also would bring the faith communities and family members into the picture. So we had all these people focused on the kids. We were trying to start these in various cities in Northern and Southern California. We did this for a couple of years and were hoping it would have a big impact. But, of course, Bobby and Huey left. They went looking for more radical solutions.

**Etc.:** What was it like starting as an instructor at City College amidst the turmoil of 1969?

**Griffin:** I had one class of about 50 students – all firemen and policemen, all Caucasian, and all older than me. The class was a good class, but you can imagine what that might have been like. And I remember my first day at City

College. They had a series of orientations that they wanted us to go to. And I had just turned down a job offer at Merritt College in Oakland. I can remember being pulled and there was a voice in my head saying, "You know it's not too late, you could just walk out." But I chose this college for some reason and it was a very good choice, it turns out.

**Etc.:** In addition to being a professor at City College, you also had a successful career as a psychologist. What kind of patients did you work with?

**Griffin:** All kinds. I worked with murderers, which is not a bad population to work with, by the way, because they tend not to repeat. I worked with child molesters, who really challenge your value system. There are other groups – like

## Before becoming chancellor of City College – Griffin practiced hypnotherapy. He counseled murderers.

anxiety and depression – who are much more fun to work with because you can really see a remarkable change. And then you have things like schizophrenia, which are not so much changeable as they are manageable. They have very interesting thinking processes. I also worked with anger management groups and practiced hypnotherapy for awhile.

**Etc.:** How did you hypnotize your patients?

**Griffin:** Basically, it's storytelling. For example, I could ask my patient to think back to when he or she was five or six years old. And to think of the house they grew up in at that time and a specific room in that house. Any room will do. And then ask the patient to describe the room and what they might be doing in the room. So you basically get someone removed from their current surroundings and to forget about the moment and what they are doing today. This will guide a person into a more relaxed state where they are more suggestible. Doing this over a period of time will usually have an impact.

**Etc.:** Have you ever been hypnotized?

**Griffin:** I actually have used self-hypnosis quite a bit, especially when I was under pressure as a student. I would get myself into a very relaxed state before class so I could focus during the lecture. When it came time for the exam, I would get myself back into a light hypnotic trance again.

**Etc.:** You've been an administrator since 1993. Was it hard to leave teaching?

**Griffin:** I had more than 10,000 students in my career. And it's always fun to run into them. And I like to believe that my best work was in the 27 years that I was a classroom instructor. It certainly was the most satisfying. The year after I left teaching, it was like having my arm ripped off.

**Etc.:** In your opinion, what is the most important attribute of a successful student?

**Griffin:** Maybe this is a strange answer, but I think students who have good self-esteem can do almost anything that they set their minds to. But if their self-esteem is low and they are attempting things, then they oftentimes say, "To the hell with it, I can't do it," or whatever. You can find people with low self-esteem who can also be very good students. But I think self-esteem is more important than any other.

**Etc.:** When does your contract as chancellor end?

**Griffin:** Three years from July. I don't see myself as renewable. The way I look at it, if I can't get the college in the condition that it needs to be in three years, then I should be gone. And if I do get it in condition, then I should be gone, too. I really see it as a set time period for me. I want to see results before I leave here, I don't want to wait.

**Etc.:** Outside of dealing with the immediate financial crisis, what is your main goal as chancellor?

**Griffin:** Job development. What we are trying to do – in a narrow definition – is get people into jobs. And we have to do more of that for certain communities. If you look at San Francisco, it's really a weird place because you have a lot of well-educated, high-level jobs, and a smaller portion of blue-collar jobs. We need to train people for both tracks, and especially, for the latter. People in



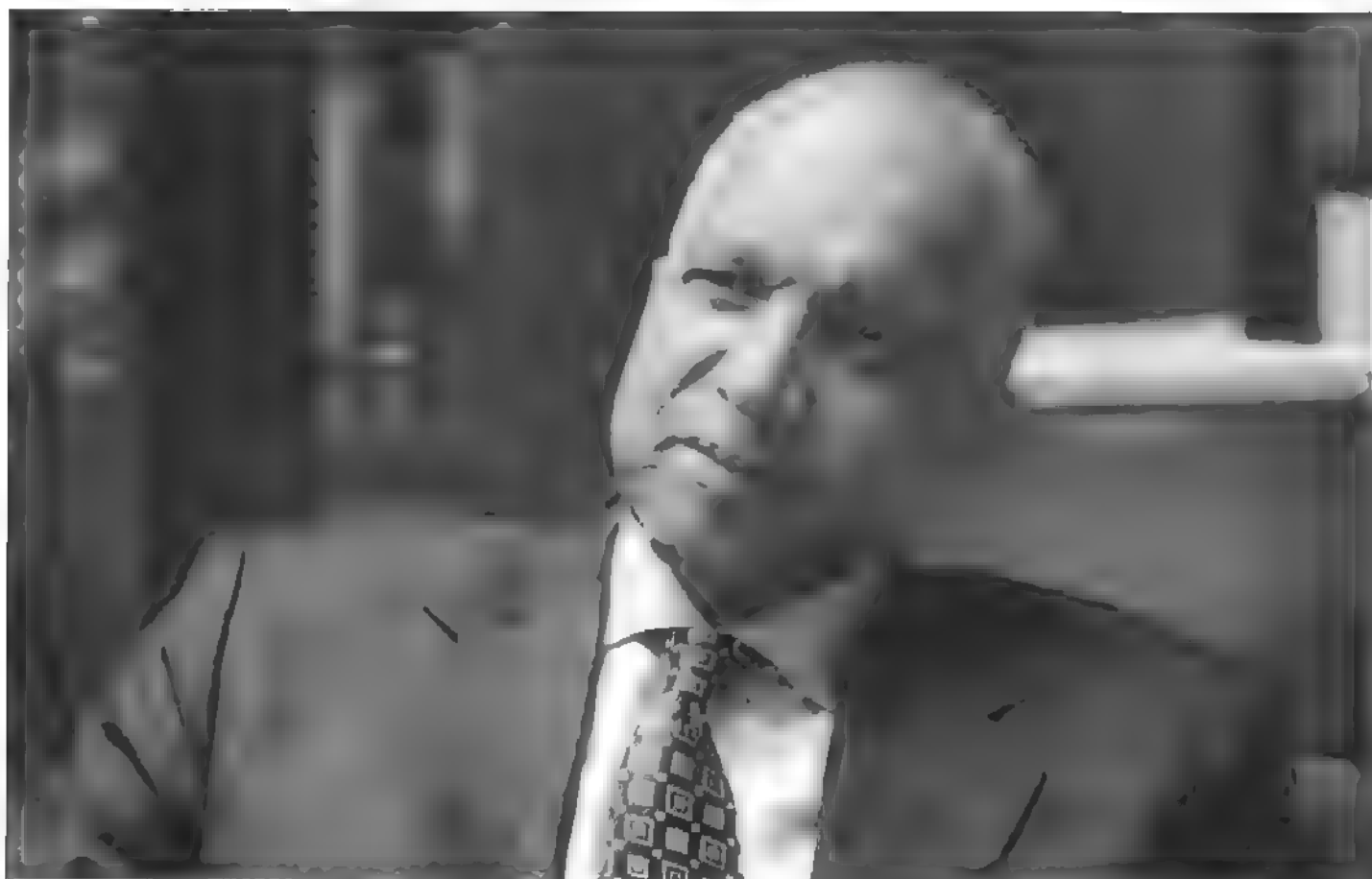


Photo by Michael P. Smith

Born in Texas, Chancellor Griffin grew up in the segregated South. He was the 10th child in a family of 18 kids

certain communities give up on education as early as the eighth grade. So the rescue has to be extremely focused. And one way of creating this focus is to make a tangible promise of work in three to six months of City College.

**Etc.:** With so much responsibility, what do you do to relieve stress?

**Griffin:** I try to be in denial about stress! No, really, if I have to be very honest about it, I tend to withdraw from social interactions when I'm stressed. And as far as conscious measures to battle stress, I used to be a runner and would run about five miles a day. But after I got prostate cancer in 1997, I fell off the wagon in terms of regular exercise. I'm working my way back now, running a couple of miles here and there.

**Etc.:** Do you have any messages that you'd like to pass on to the student body?

**Griffin:** Well, I think that they're living in a very interesting time, which is what

they should be focused on. I was very happy to be living in the '60s because it was an interesting time. And I think you have as much dynamic stuff happening now. It's kind of scarier, though. But it's very, very exciting. So I think it's OK to be more self-focused and be more self-righteous in what you are doing. This generation is going to make a huge difference.

**Etc.:** Do you have regular family reunions with your siblings?

**Griffin:** I get together with immediate family members every week — my children and grandchildren. And I see my brothers and sisters — those who are in town, which is about half of them — about every week, too. But there are no regular reunions with the whole family. A big reunion would be interesting. It would probably be around 1,000 people.

**Etc.:** How do you and your wife, Min, like to spend your free time?

**Griffin:** Our favorite thing to do is to

travel. In 2007, we went all over Europe for a few weeks. That was a lot of fun. And we've taken a big trip to China, too. We've done some smaller trips, but the longer trips are fun because you really get to learn more.

**Etc.:** Have you ever thought about leaving City College?

**Griffin:** I did, but only for a few days. When I finished my PhD at Berkeley, I was offered an opportunity to work at Duke University. I was getting pushed really hard from the Berkeley professors to go there. For three or four days, I was really toying with the idea of going to Duke. At the time, I had worked here for nine years. But ultimately I said no. I would be comfortable on Duke's campus, but not that part of the South in 1978. I gave up on that and said my pathway is at City College. I've never regretted that. To me, it's been perfect.

**Brent Stephenson**  
stephenson.brent@gmail.com

Sean O'Brien

# City's celebrity chef

by Sarah Horn

Soft pillows of seared potato gnocchi sit piled upon one another in a savory Parmesan mascarpone butter sauce. Pools of vibrant green basil oil topped with slightly sweet crumbles of amaretti cookies provide the finishing touches.

It took Chef Sean O'Brien a long time to develop the perfect gnocchi dish.

It is gnocchi as it is intended. Not doughy or spongy, but a complement to the sauce engulfing it. Potato dumpling pasta never tasted this good.

Sixteen years ago, at the age of 22, O'Brien didn't know gnocchi from pepperoni pizza. Whatever he knew he picked up from his grandmother and cooking magazines.

Things changed quickly after he graduated from the Culinary Arts program at City College. Gary Danko, one of the most respected chefs in the Bay Area, hired him right out of school.

He's also worked with Suzette Gresham at Acquarello, Sylvain Portay at the Ritz Carlton, and chef, author and radio personality Narsai David.

Now he enjoys the spotlight. During his three year stint as executive chef at Myth restaurant, his reputation grew. In 2007, Food and Wine Magazine identified him as one of the Best New Chefs in the country.

A day before his 40th birthday last October, he and his wife, Patricia Hughes, opened up Zinnia on Jackson Street, near Columbus Avenue.

"I never really planned on being where I am now," O'Brien



Photos by Brianna Kirby

Executive Chef Sean O'Brien, owner of Zinnia restaurant, got his start in the Culinary Arts program here at City College.

said, thumbing a crisp white cotton napkin as he sat in a side dining area of Zinnia.

"Things just blossomed from making the right decisions and working with the right chefs."

As soon as he finished the culinary program at City College, O'Brien knew what he wanted. He was eager to learn fine dining and French cuisine, and to work in a professional kitchen.

But first he had to finish a six-month internship before he could graduate. That's when he met Danko. He worked for him at The Dining Room at the Ritz Carlton, a five-star French restaurant.

Lynda Hirose, placement counselor for the Culinary Arts and Hospitality

Management Program, arranged O'Brien's internship with the master chef.

"Sean was very focused on what he wanted to do and very consistent in his ways," Hirose said. "He's the same person today."

She has placed other students at Delfina Restaurant, Noc Valley Bakery, Foreign Cinema, Guzen Cake, Millennium, Hotel Nikko, Fifth Floor, and Zinnia. City College's program has earned respect in the industry, drawing many of San Francisco's top restaurants to sponsor interns. Founded in 1936, it was the first two-year hospitality program in the country.

When O'Brien was hired by Danko at the end of his internship, he knew he was on his way.

"I proved myself," O'Brien said.

Working with Danko was his first exposure to elegant dining.



Suddenly, he was up to his elbows in caviar, foie gras and lobster.

The only formal training he received in culinary arts was at City College. He built his career on experience.

Sitting at a long metal table — supported by 140-year-old railroad ties found near Jackson Square — his demeanor is confident and calm.

He is focused on the details. His short gray hair is neatly cut. His immaculate white uniform is accented by black piping and a Chinese collar. Above his chest pocket, his name is embroidered in thick black thread.

After he graduated in 1991 with a degree in Business Marketing from Santa Clara University, he interned at Bank of America. However, he had a better recipe for success.

"When I was renewing Bon Appétit for 3 years instead of one, it dawned on me that I had a serious interest in cooking."

He considered enrolling in the Culinary Institute of America in St. Helena and the Le Cordon Bleu program at the California Culinary Academy. But O'Brien chose City College because it offered more for less. The school had a good reputation, classes were more hands-on, and it only cost \$13 a unit.

The diversity of the city and its love of food lured him here. Its fresh ingredients, top culinary talent, and ethnic influences kept him here.

"You have the Mission area, with its Latin American influences. You are close to Napa, with its wineries, and then there's the Central Valley, with its fresh produce."

O'Brien's first real attraction to food came from his grandmother. Growing up in Texas, he and his family would travel to San Jose to stay with her for holidays and vacations. She loved feeding her family.

"She was a typical grandmother, always in the kitchen."

He remembers how she would serve dishes that didn't necessarily go together. She wasn't concerned with rules. For her, simple enjoyment came from cooking for her family.

"There was no theme to the meals — it was about eating what she liked to cook and what we liked to eat. Tamales with

cracked crab and guacamole. Or salami, leg of lamb, and seared scallops."

Danko taught O'Brien the importance of precision. He worked with Danko for nine years: a year at The Ritz Carlton, three years at Viognier in San Mateo and five years at Gary Danko's restaurant on Fisherman's Wharf.

"The focus on detail was a great thing to be exposed to," O'Brien said. "A lot of that really rubbed off on me."

The ambiance of his own restaurant reflects this.

Freshly cut flowers adorn each table. An orange, yellow, and red striped cloth lantern hangs in the center of the dining room, casting a soft light against dark cherry wood floors and tables. Perfectly aligned amber glass candleholders glow along the cement-topped bar. Wine glasses behind screened cabinet doors invite diners to drink and enjoy their meals.

"We've developed the Gary Danko eye — seeing things that other people wouldn't see — the angle of the candle, the water spot, or the pen that rolled under the table," O'Brien's wife said.

The El Salvador native, who was Danko's assistant, met O'Brien while

working at Viognier.

When O'Brien left Gary Danko's four years ago for an Executive Chef position at Myth, he was ready to run a restaurant. Now he was in charge of designing his own menu and signing off on dishes.

O'Brien received waves of positive reviews while at Myth, and had no immediate plans to open his own restaurant.

The buzz began soon after Myth opened. Some of the top chefs in the Bay Area dined at the restaurant, Ron Siegel, Laurent Gras, Daniel Patterson and Gérard Hitigoyen. It was flattering.

But at the height of its popularity in December 2007, the owner suddenly closed the restaurant.

Unemployed, O'Brien began interviewing for other jobs and considered opening his own restaurant. He even thought of doing something else in the culinary and hospitality industry.

"There are a lot of different avenues you can go down in the culinary industry," he said.

When Scott Howard restaurant on Jackson Street closed, an opportunity opened. The location and timing was perfect.

Zinnia, which they named after the flower, opened last October.

In his review of Zinnia, San Francisco Chronicle restaurant critic Michael Bauer wrote, "It took over what had been a failed space on Jackson and gave it new life, creating a magical convergence of great service, exciting food, reasonable prices and a sexy interior that made everyone feel good."

O'Brien runs the back of the house while his wife manages the front. His stepdaughter Elizabeth, 22, works as a hostess.

"Service is very important to us," Hughes said, looking around the floor at diners. "The word 'no' doesn't exist in our vocabulary."

At 6:30 on a Thursday night, the sound of Spanish guitar music can be heard over the hum of conversation.

O'Brien's vision at Zinnia is casual elegance — food that indulges while still being approachable and familiar. Dishes that you couldn't necessarily recreate at home — like the seared Tasmanian salmon with heirloom carrots, turnips



O'Brien's new restaurant is located on Jackson Street near Columbus.



Chef O'Brien portions ingredients for his pancetta-wrapped veal dish, which he serves with melted leeks in a truffle sauce

and celery root jus. Or fresh rigatoni pasta with foie gras cream, Matsake mushrooms and Marsala wine.

"People are generally very surprised when they taste his food, because they think that they've had it before," Hughes said. "But when they have the dish, they discover new flavors."

O'Brien's culinary focus is "New American," which integrates Vietnamese, Japanese, and Hawaiian flavors with French and American cuisine.

"In the beginning, it was all about the butter and cream, and now it has changed," O'Brien said. "People care about where their food is coming from and what's in it. So, lessening the

butter and cream, and combining French techniques with Asian flavors is how I lighten it up."

When O'Brien created his menu he brought over some of his popular dishes from Myth. The seared pork tenderloin and pork belly with star anise, egg dumplings and citrus, along with the seared potato gnocchi are prime examples.

"I didn't want to make a cookie cutter restaurant of Myth," O'Brien said. "But, if certain dishes worked, why change them?"

The wine list, chosen by sommelier Samantha Brennan, includes wines from all over California along with selections from France and Austria.

"I've told all the people that I've hired, 'You have to be self-motivated and have the desire to do the work you are doing, and take the initiative to come up with menu items or specials,'" O'Brien said, as he straightened the cutlery. "It's a learning process for me as well. Chefs are always open to new things and new ideas."

With more than 3,500 restaurants in San Francisco, Zinnia has a lot of competition. O'Brien and his wife dine at other restaurants to check out other chefs.

"There is always a curiosity to see what people are doing," O'Brien said, as he looked at his wife sitting across the table. "Doing research and going out is a treat for us," Hughes said.

O'Brien and his wife work five days a week in the restaurant, prepping for guests and working dinner shifts. The days are long and exhausting.

"Most days are a good 12 hours," O'Brien said. "But hopefully, if you love what you do, you don't watch the clock."

**Sarah M. Horn • sarahmhorn@gmail.com**



O'Brien and his wife, Patricia Hughes, own Zinnia



# Into the heart of Africa

One woman's journey to the roots of humanity

Story and photos by Lynda Brommage

A year ago, I boarded a 24-hour Continental flight from San Francisco to Nairobi, Kenya.

With a \$2,400 round-trip ticket, I had nine weeks to explore five central and east African countries: Kenya, Uganda, Rwanda, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and Tanzania.

I had traveled to other Third World countries, but this trip would be the most challenging. As a woman traveling solo on a budget of \$50 a day, it was not going to be a Club Med experience.

Strapped to my ribcage, underneath my clothing, was a money belt containing \$2,000 in cash—plus two credit cards, a passport and an immunization card.

Everything else was crammed into a \$20 Wal-Mart backpack with plenty of pockets.

Equipped with two digital cameras and my trusty old Pentax, I felt prepared to document my journey. Besides, I had just completed two courses in photography at City College. I brought back nearly 5,000 images.

I went to Africa to explore... and to get back to basics.

Like Thoreau, I wanted "to live deliberately, to front only the essential facts of life, and see if I could not learn what it had to teach..."

I celebrated my 40th birthday with Dian Fossey's endangered mountain gorillas in Rwanda.

## Kenya

The plane lands at night in Nairobi, one of the most dangerous cities in the world. Without hotel reservations or transport arrangements, I am on my own. Sometimes too much planning can take the surprise out of any adventure.

Kenya is where archaeologist Louis Leakey discovered the first human fossils. If you trace your ancestors back far enough, you'll end up here, where human life began.

Past customs, luggage in hand, I exit into the darkness. An airport security guard escorts me to a cab. After a 30-minute ride, we arrive at a small hotel off the main road. By midnight, I'm

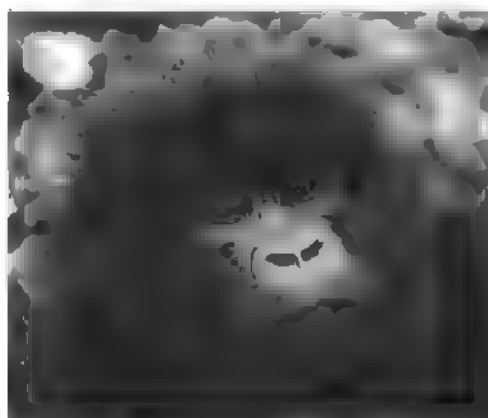
snug in my \$20 room with a bright blue mosquito net hanging from the ceiling over my bed.

I spend my first two days in Nairobi, mapping out my trip.

My first stop is the elephant and rhinoceros orphanage near Nairobi National Park, where I touch and feed elephant calves, and shake hands with their little trunks. Their big dark eyes and long eyelashes remind me of Margaret Keane's "Sad Eyes" paintings. Although playful, a few are still distraught from the loss of their mother and hide behind their caretaker.

At the giraffe center located near the elephant orphanage, a handful of the endangered Rothschild giraffes roam within a fenced area. As instructed by my guide, I put a feeding pellet between my lips and beckon a giraffe. A 20-footer swoops down with his big, black, sticky tongue and French-kisses my face.

"Out of Africa" author Isak Dinesen (aka: Baroness Karen von Blixen-Finecke) spent 18 years in Kenya struggling with her coffee plantation. Her sprawl-



Left: Zebra graze in Kenya's Masai Mara Game Reserve.

Center: Gorillas lounge in the jungle of Rwanda's Volcanoes National Park.

Right: The author feeds a giraffe at the Rothschild Center in Nairobi, Kenya.

ing stone house stands in the middle of a well groomed garden surrounded by palm and Italian cypress trees. I sit on the same stone porch where Meryl Streep and Robert Redford watched sunsets in the movie

Three days later, my overnight train arrives early in the morning in Mombasa, the chief seaport town in Kenya. A "tuk-tuk" motorcycle with an enclosed passenger compartment delivers me to the Palm Tree Hotel. I walk the old town's cobbled roads past colorful shops that spill into the street with clothing, pots and pans, handbags and crafts.

At the "Ricoda" restaurant, the Swahili owners befriend me. They serve more than I can consume and even invite me to their home, where their four children entertain me. Ali, their teenage nephew, speaks broken English as he escorts me around Mombasa. At Bamburi Beach, African hip-hop music plays as people ride camels along the shoreline.

From Kenya's Amboseli National Park, snow capped Mount Kilimanjaro in Tanzania can be seen in the distance towering over the hot, dry and dusty savanna.

Two young women in their twenties join me on a safari. We camp in battered green canvas tents. The cool, clear evenings are perfect for stargazing. The only sounds come from our crackling campfire.

Dressed warmly, we set out before sunrise after a cup of hot tea or coffee.

Our white minivan's open top allows us to stand and take pictures as we explore the park.

Driving slowly along winding dirt roads, streaks of early morning sunlight stretch across the plains. The area is teeming with wildlife -- zebras, gazelles, wildebeests, giraffes, elephants and water buffalo.

On a distant hill, a herd of nearly 100 elephants lumbers in slow motion toward a haze-filled valley. Later, we cross paths with a large, older male walking slowly toward his harem. The grassy plains offer few distractions, enabling us to study his deliberate stride and majestic demeanor. One long, worn tusk almost reaches the ground. The other is broken in half. Unaffected by our presence, he moves with grace and dignity, his high, powerful shoulders, ragged ears and wrinkled hide reminiscent of the woolly mammoths of the Pleistocene era

Every now and then, the Masai people appear in their brightly colored wraps against the earth-toned landscape. They still herd their cattle across the Serengeti and Masai Mara, as they have done through the centuries.

Masai huts, made of mud, blend into the scenery. The Masai diet consists of milk and blood from their cattle, maize and water. No fruit. No vegetables.

On the other side of Kenya, in the Masa. Mara Game Reserve, the once-a-year spectacle of the wildebeest migra-

tion is taking place. Thousands cross the dried Serengeti plains to the lush Mara in search of food. They're being chased by tourists and predators. Their thundering hooves kick up dust clouds as they snort and grunt across the terrain.

On an overnight bus ride through Kenya to Uganda, we quickly pass through the province of Nyanza, where Barack Obama's father is from.

## Uganda

Uganda resembles a big jungle with pockets of civilization. Lake Victoria, the source of the Nile River, is on its southern border.

On a cold, lonely night at Sipi Falls, I sleep in a cheap mud hut in the middle of nowhere. It rains, hails and thunders all night long. A half-pint of cheap Bond 7 Whiskey keeps me warm.

In Kampala, Uganda's capital, I board a crowded minivan, and two hours later arrive in Jinja, the headwaters of the Nile River known for its premier white water rafting. A platform surrounded by about a dozen large yellow rafts overlooks the river. After paying \$120 for the all-day trip, I grab a life jacket and climb into one of the rafts with seven other European tourists.

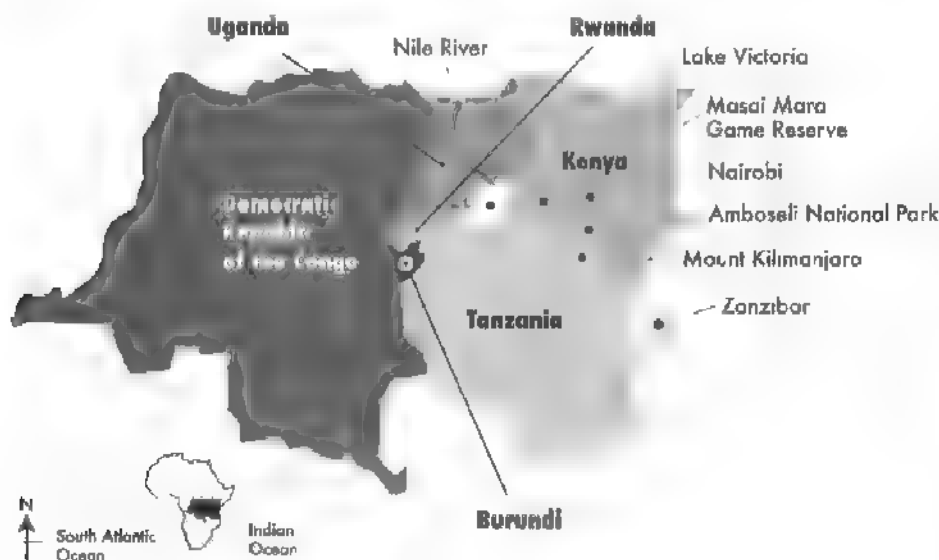
The guide tells us, "When I say, 'Get down,' get down! And when I say, 'Oh shit,' get down fast."

We push off the embankment and into the green Nile and immediately hit some rapids. Soon, my shorts and T shirt are drenched.

After the sun disappears, it begins raining. Thunder booms in the distance, followed by flashes of lightening. We're only halfway through our six hour trip and we're shivering.

Each rapid has a name. The last, most dangerous one, called "the Bad Place," is where our raft flips over. Stuck in an undertow, tumbling like a Barbie doll in a washing machine, I feel helpless. It seems like an eternity, but I try to stay calm. I know the current and my life vest will eventually bring me to the surface.

An African kayaker rescues me by grabbing my vest and holding my head out of the water. I gasp for air. He shakes me, and says, "Madam! Madam! Are you OK?"







An older male elephant, missing half a tusk, marches slowly toward his harem in Kenya's Masai Mara Game Reserve.

When he finally drags me back to the raft, I have goose bumps the size of warts. After swallowing half the Nile, I'm sick for two days.

#### Rwanda

Entering Rwanda, the bus dips, climbs and swerves around each hill. Known as the "Land of a Thousand Hills," Rwanda is not unlike San Francisco. But vastly different.

A sunlit haze lingers over the landscape. Through the windows, dark-skinned, colorfully-clad farmers can be seen in lush green valleys working their crops.

I'm the only "Mazungu" on the bus. Mazungu is slang for white person. I stand out like a marshmallow in the middle of a s'more.

In Kigali, Rwanda's capital, I check into a cheap hotel. My 40th birthday is coming up and I'm looking forward to the highlight of my trip—seeing the last of the mountain gorillas in Volcanoes National Park. There are only seven gorilla areas in the park open to tourists. We're going to search for the Susa group—consisting of 38 gorillas, including four infants. The same gorillas primatologist Dian Fossey studied before she was brutally murdered, some say by poachers.

After an hour long ride, we begin our 3 hour trek, which leads us up through

the slippery floor of the jungle. Near a clearing, our guide stops and shuts off his two way radio.

Guides armed with rifles emerge from behind some trees. They've located the gorillas.

Moving slowly, quietly through the jungle, we come upon the gorillas. Sprawled on ferns and mounds of leafy vegetation in a clearing surrounded by trees, they tread softly while eating foliage. The cubs and infants play while the females keep watch over them. Three males preside over the group. When the alpha male, a large silverback, lets out a roar from 20 feet away, it startles us.

While sitting on a thick clump of foliage, I exchange glances with Poppy, a 36-year-old female who was part of Dian Fossey's original study group. Only 10 feet separate us. Her dreamy eyes are piercing. Only 700 mountain gorillas are left in the wild.

We observe these gentle creatures for an hour before the alpha male gathers the group and disappears into the mist.

Located in the heart of Africa, Rwanda is a small country with a troubled past. In 1994, Hutu militia slaughtered more than 800,000 Tutsi. Eighty five percent of the population was wiped out in about 100 days. Using machetes, clubs and guns, they systematically went village to village, house to house, all



Lions prowl the Marz, which teems with wildlife

across the country. One of the worst cases of genocide in history, it went largely ignored by the international community.

The Kigali Memorial Center, a modern city museum, features an exhibition depicting the 1994 Tutsi genocide. It's only a prelude to the Murambi Genocide Memorial Center, four hours away.

When I arrive at Murambi, the whole place looks deserted. Originally a school, the hilltop memorial overlooks a few small villages and lush farmland.

More than 25,000 people lost their lives here. Women. Children. Young. Old. It didn't matter. Hacked, clubbed, shot to death. Many Tutsi came here seeking refuge. They tried to defend themselves using rocks and clubs to protect their families. But it was useless.

Mass graves now mark the spot.

Behind the main building, brick classrooms, attached in rows, line the hilltop.

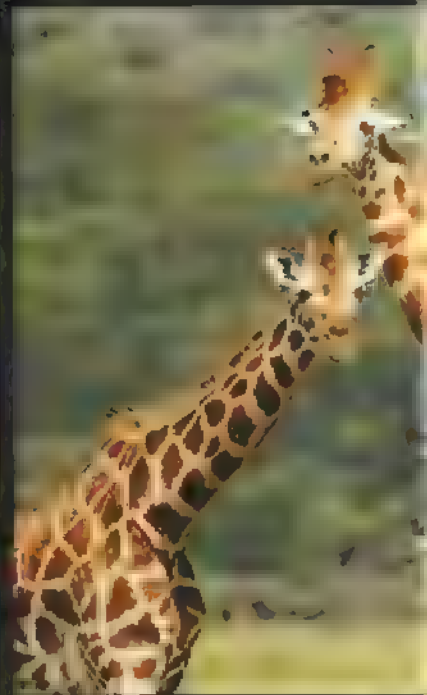
Inside the door to one of the classrooms, preserved dead bodies, neatly arranged and covered in white quicklime, lie on wood racks two feet from the ground.

About two dozen of the classrooms are filled with preserved bodies in various positions. Some rooms with bones

**AFRICA:** continued on page 36  
[See photos next page]



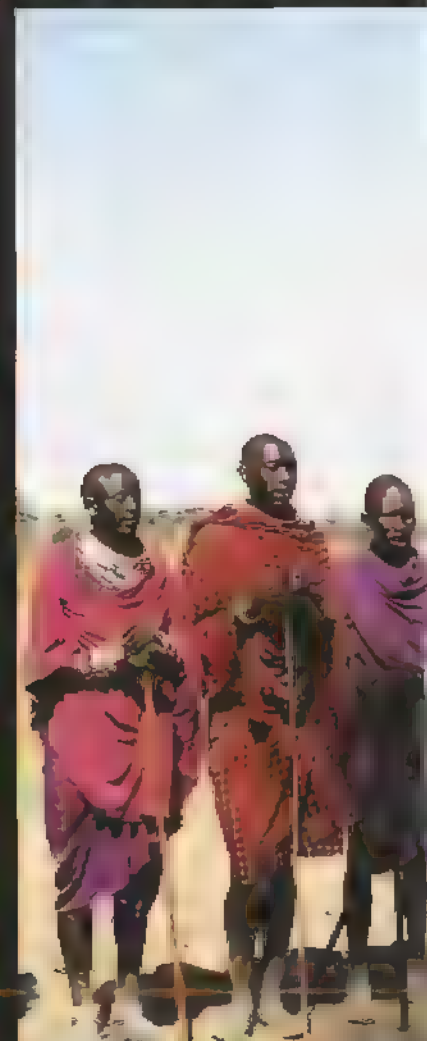
School children from a village near Sipi Falls, Uganda.



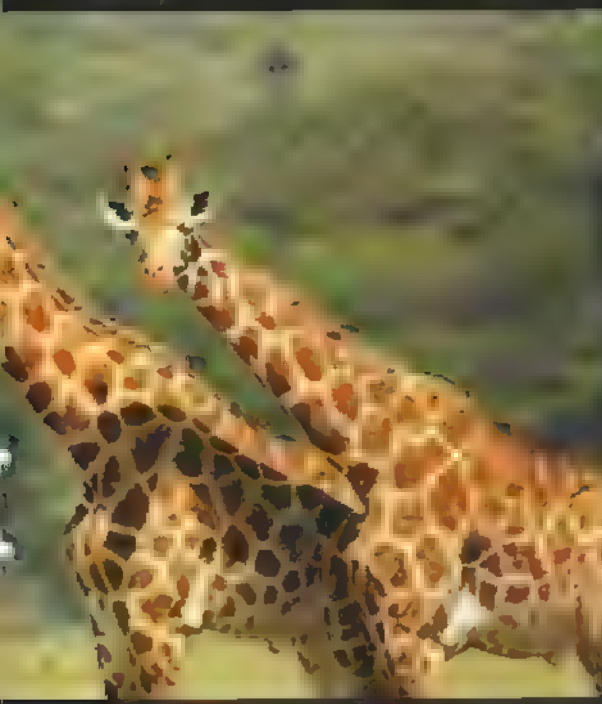
Giraffes in Lake Nakuru National Park



Young genocide victims at the Murambi Memorial in Rwanda.



A Masai tribesman jumps for the camera



rk, Kenya



A little girl lunches near Lake Bunyonyi, Uganda



era in Amboselli, Kenya



Water buffalos lying low in Kenya's Masai Mara Game Reserve





# A portrait of a revolutionary artist

## Profile of Black Panther Emory Douglas

by Shinyung Oh

With loaded shotguns in the trunk, 23-year-old Emory Douglas drove to Sacramento on May 2, 1967. The City College student was not alone. Thirty other armed members of the Black Panther Party, divided up in six cars, formed a procession headed for the state Capitol.

The night before, militant author Eldridge Cleaver, who was on parole, invited Douglas to ride along. Douglas didn't know what he was getting into. When he showed up at 7 the next morning in Oakland, Panther co-founders Bobby Seale and Huey Newton laid out the agenda.

In Sacramento, the group planned to oppose an Assembly bill introduced by Don Mulford (R-Oakland) to ban civilians — specifically the Panthers — from openly carrying loaded firearms. Newton and Seale told Panther members to avoid pointing their weapons at anyone and to submit peacefully if they were arrested. Newton was delegated to deal with the press.

Seale led the Panthers across the Capitol grounds and onto the steps. A few hundred yards away, Gov. Ronald Reagan was speaking to a group of 200 white kids who were members of "Future Youth, Future Leaders." As soon as they saw Seale and his entourage, the press turned their attention from the school children to the armed Panthers. The governor was whisked away.

On their way to the Capitol building, the press led them to the Assembly chamber. As Seale entered, legislators ducked under their desks. Realizing that he had mistakenly walked onto the floor of the Assembly, instead of the specta-



Photo by Max P. Mollring

Emory Douglas converted his drafty downstairs garage into an art studio, where jars of paintbrushes, pencils and tubs of art supplies surround his desk.

tor gallery, Seale retreated with his men.

"Hey, man," he said, "I'm sorry. The damn press led us into the wrong place."

Within hours, the police arrested Seale, Cleaver, Douglas and the other Panthers. The story made front-page news everywhere.

The Black Panthers had captured the media's attention. It was Douglas' first national appearance with them.

Douglas served as the Panthers' Minister of Culture from 1967 until 1980, when they disbanded. He was then "Revolutionary Artist." During those 13 years, he created most of the Panthers' art work. Mothers and children brandishing pistols. A policeman depicted as a weeping pig in tatters and bandages. A boy flashing a Black Panther newspaper with the headline, "All Power to the People."

His work filled the pages of the Panthers' weekly newspaper, which had

a peak circulation of 400,000. Plastered on storefronts, sides of buildings, apartments, and fences, his images told the story for those who could not read.

A Panther member from the founding days to the end, Douglas accompanied Eldridge Cleaver when he met with U.N. delegates to discuss the plight of African Americans. He traveled to China to meet Red Party representatives. He visited Cleaver in exile in Algeria. He sat through Bobby Seale's trial and got arrested for contempt.

FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover said the Panthers were "the biggest threat to the internal security of the country."

In a memo addressed to Hoover, the FBI called Douglas "one of the dominant members" of the Black Panther Party — a subversive, racist, fascist.

They described his artwork as violent and anti-establishment in nature. They claimed he engaged in revolutionary activities and advocated killing police

Opposite: Emory Douglas illustrates a mother's pride even in the midst of dire poverty.

Artwork courtesy of Emory Douglas.

officers

The FBI followed them, searched their luggage and tapped their phones.

The police arrested Douglas numerous times. During one of his arrests, the FBI attempted to interrogate him. He refused. Afterward, the FBI noted, "Douglas proudly walked back to the cell."

The FBI was unrelenting in its efforts to disband this group of black militants who believed in "self-defense by any means necessary."

The Panthers, whose average age was 18, embodied black anger against the white establishment in an era during the Civil Rights and the anti-war movements. Although they had more than 5,000 official members in more than two dozen major cities, their following was greater than that.

Their all-black uniform included berets, leather jackets and Afros. They routinely organized protests. And they carried loaded firearms – until the government made it illegal.

As a part of their Ten-Point Platform, they demanded an end to police brutality, freedom for all black prisoners and an exemption for black men from military service.

"We were definitely not a mainstream organization," Douglas says.

Today, Douglas, 66, lives alone in the Portola District in the two-story house his mother purchased when he was a Panther. He is renovating it to make room for his children and grandchildren who visit often. Isandla, 9, and Anelisa, 5, love to spend weekends with "Poppy" because he lets them watch TV.

His refrigerator door is decorated with "Free Huey Newton" and the Panthers' 40th Reunion magnets, along with family photos.

A black knit cap covers his bald head. His smile highlights mischievous eyes and round cheeks.

In a blue sweat shirt and black jeans, he laughs easily as he talks about how some Panthers "liberated" an imprisoned member and helped her flee to Cuba.

In a drafty downstairs garage, his art studio resembles a storage room. Jars of paintbrushes, pencils and tubs of art supplies surround an artist's table. Stacks of prints sit in dust-



Photo courtesy the Sacramento Bee Collection

Douglas was arrested in 1967 during a Panther protest at the state Capitol in Sacramento.

says they were very poor and struggled to survive. They once rented an apartment off of Linden Street, where Douglas made his bed on the kitchen floor – with the cockroaches.

As a kid, he hung out in the Fillmore District. He remembers wearing a curfew tag that the government required of under-aged kids in black neighborhoods. He often ran away from home.

"I was just bad – a wannabe gang banger," he said.

Life wasn't fair. One day, after he boarded the bus at Haight and Stanyan streets, a passenger threw something at the driver. The driver said Douglas did it. Even though the other riders defended him, an officer dragged him to the police station and said, "You need to take your little black ass back to Africa."

Adding to his humiliation, they dragged him past his mother, who ran a concession stand at the Youth Guidance Center. Everyone there knew her – and her trouble-making son – and they sometimes sent him to help her even though he was supposed to be under arrest.

During his teenage years, Douglas was in and out of the Youth Guidance Center and La Honda's Log Cabin Ranch,

covered boxes.

As he pulls old photographs of his revolutionary days out of an album, he studies each one carefully.

The album is filled with pictures of people singing, dancing, clapping and nugging. Panther children eating breakfast at the Free Breakfast Program. Panthers helping grandmas. Panthers visiting loved ones in prison. Families clutching brown bags from the Panthers' Free Food Program. Members testing for sickle cell anemia and running voter registration drives.

The media and law enforcement portrayed the Panthers as domestic terrorists.

But the photos tell a different story.

Douglas was born in Grand Rapids, Mich., on May 24, 1943 during World War II. In the early 1950s, he and his divorced mother moved to San Francisco. She believed the milder weather would help his asthma.

For the next 15 years, they moved from one small apartment to another. Douglas



where he learned to make his bed military-style, cleaned pigpens and worked in a woodshop.

During his 18 months at the Youth Authority, he worked in a print shop. For the first time, he applied his artistic skills in a structured environment. The counselor there encouraged him to study art at City College.

A few months after his release, Douglas enrolled. When a college counselor suggested that he try commercial art, Douglas didn't know what it was. It would be the foundation for his role with the Panthers.

Coming from Youth Authority, Douglas found the predominantly white Arts Department "a culture shock." But he found a mentor who critiqued his work against professional standards. In one assignment dealing with race relations, his instructor encouraged him to be "more provocative." Douglas took his advice.

Another teacher discouraged him from focusing on black people as subjects because there was no market for that kind of art. Douglas proved him wrong. The Panthers provided an audience.

Douglas had never heard of the Black Panthers before he

met Huey Newton and Bobby Seale at an event honoring Malcolm X's widow, Betty Shabazz, in February of 1967.

Newton and Seale ignited Douglas' imagination.

"There were a lot of young people like myself who just didn't want to turn the other cheek," Douglas said. "[Seale and Newton] were years ahead of me. They already had a focus, a vision of what they wanted, how they wanted it done. The whole bit."

Douglas hung out with Newton and Seale. From his mother's house on Divisadero and Haight streets, he rode the bus over to Newton's house, and then to Seale's place in Oakland. They patrolled the neighborhoods to keep an eye on police officers.

"We patrolled with law books, tape recorders and guns — legal guns," Seale said. The Panthers observed officers making arrests, reminded suspects of their rights and provided bail when necessary. Newton, who was a law student, knew the penal code and often recited it to officers.

They often met at a place called the Black House, where Cleaver lived. When Douglas saw Seale typing out a newspaper on legal-sized paper and writing out headlines with a black marker, he offered to help. He went home and grabbed his



May 29, 1971: Douglas' work shows resilience and hope in the face of oppression.



November 7, 1970: Douglas portrays an impaled policeman in "All Power to the People, Death to the Pigs"

art supplies. An hour later, he impressed Seale and Newton with his drawings.

He was put in charge of the publication's artwork.

Kathleen Cleaver, Eldridge Cleaver's ex-wife and Communications Secretary for the Party, has a piece of Douglas' artwork hanging in her living room.

"At Panther meetings, he would sit, quietly drawing," she said. "We'd be discussing how the country is changing, police killing in Berkeley, police brutality. We were talking about things that were happening. He would be very quiet. He was absorbing what people were saying, but he was expressing the ideas we were discussing in pictures."

Douglas worked most nights at the Panthers' headquarters in Oakland where he helped prepare the newspaper.

He lived in collective housing, where members participated in party meet-

ings, performed security duties, attended classes on politics and current events, and received training on handling weapons.

Sometimes, members' mothers banged on doors to try to take their teenage sons and daughters home. Douglas' own mother reportedly was "scared to death" about his involvement.

Sometimes, infidelity among married couples caused trouble.

"These married women see all these fine men and the men see all these fine women," Douglas said, "and they don't want to be married no more. So that was kind of causing problems in the Party."

In 1969, Douglas married another member of the Panther Party. At the church wedding in West Oakland, a Panther minister presided. Seale was Douglas' best man. Dressed in dark sunglasses and a black leather jacket with a Huey Newton button pinned to his

lapel, Douglas held his bride's hands and smiled through his goatee.

When his wife decided to leave the Party nine months later, Douglas had their marriage annulled.

Douglas had a son and a daughter through two other Panther relationships.

"Sisters liked Emory," Seale said, "and Emory loved sisters."

Everyone loved Emory, except the police, Kathleen Cleaver said.

The Panthers disbanded almost 30 years ago, but Douglas speaks as though the revolution lives on.

He still attends protests—most recently over Israel's invasion of Palestine and the killing of Oscar Grant, a young black man who was fatally shot by BART Police.

"Just wanted to show solidarity," he said.

He sits on the board of the Freedom Archives and EastSide Arts Alliance. He travels to museums around the world, where his work is exhibited.

His collection, "Black Panther: The Revolutionary Art of Emory Douglas," was published in 2007.

"Douglas' substantial body of work exists as a powerful graphic record of the Black Panthers' legacy," according to the Museum of Contemporary Art in Los Angeles, which recently exhibited his work.

Whenever Sia Gabriele mentions that Douglas is her father, people stop to say, "Wow, your father is a bad artist."

At a recent event in Oakland to commemorate Huey Newton's birthday for Black History Month, Douglas shows up in his black jeans, maroon knit top, dark fall jacket and a brown beret. He locks hands with Bobby Seale and waves hello to Billy X. Jennings, the Panthers' historian, who is arranging the display of Douglas' prints on the tables.

Taking the stage, Douglas flips through his retrospective slideshow. Words like "capitalist pig" and "revolution" flow easily from his lips, as hip-hop music plays in the background.

"There's still a lot of work to do," he says as he pumps his fist in the air.

**At an event to commemorate Huey Newton's birthday for Black History Month, Douglas showed up in his black jeans, maroon knit top, dark fall jacket, and a brown beret. Words like 'capitalist pig' and 'revolution' still flow easily from his lips.**

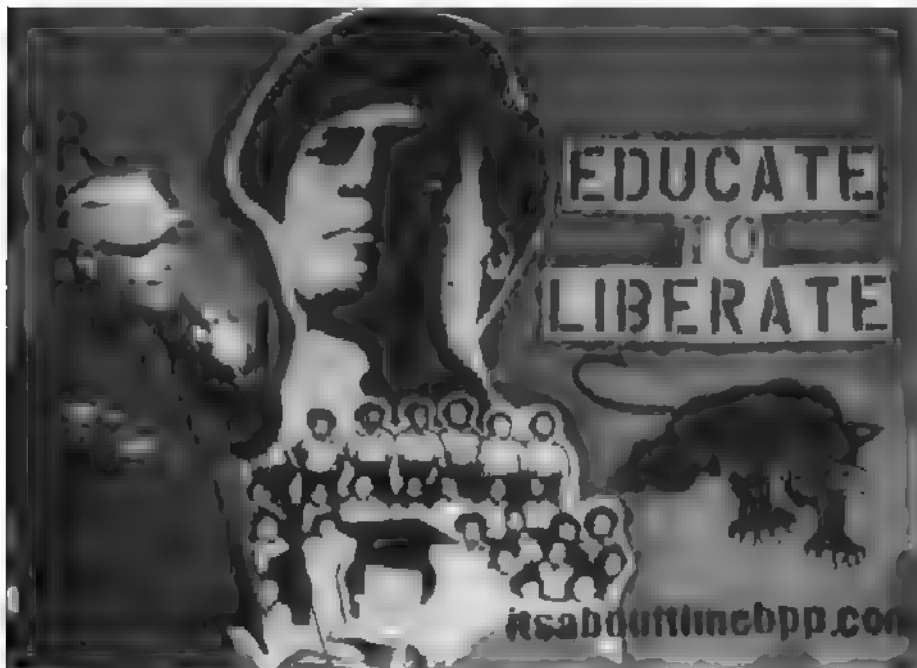


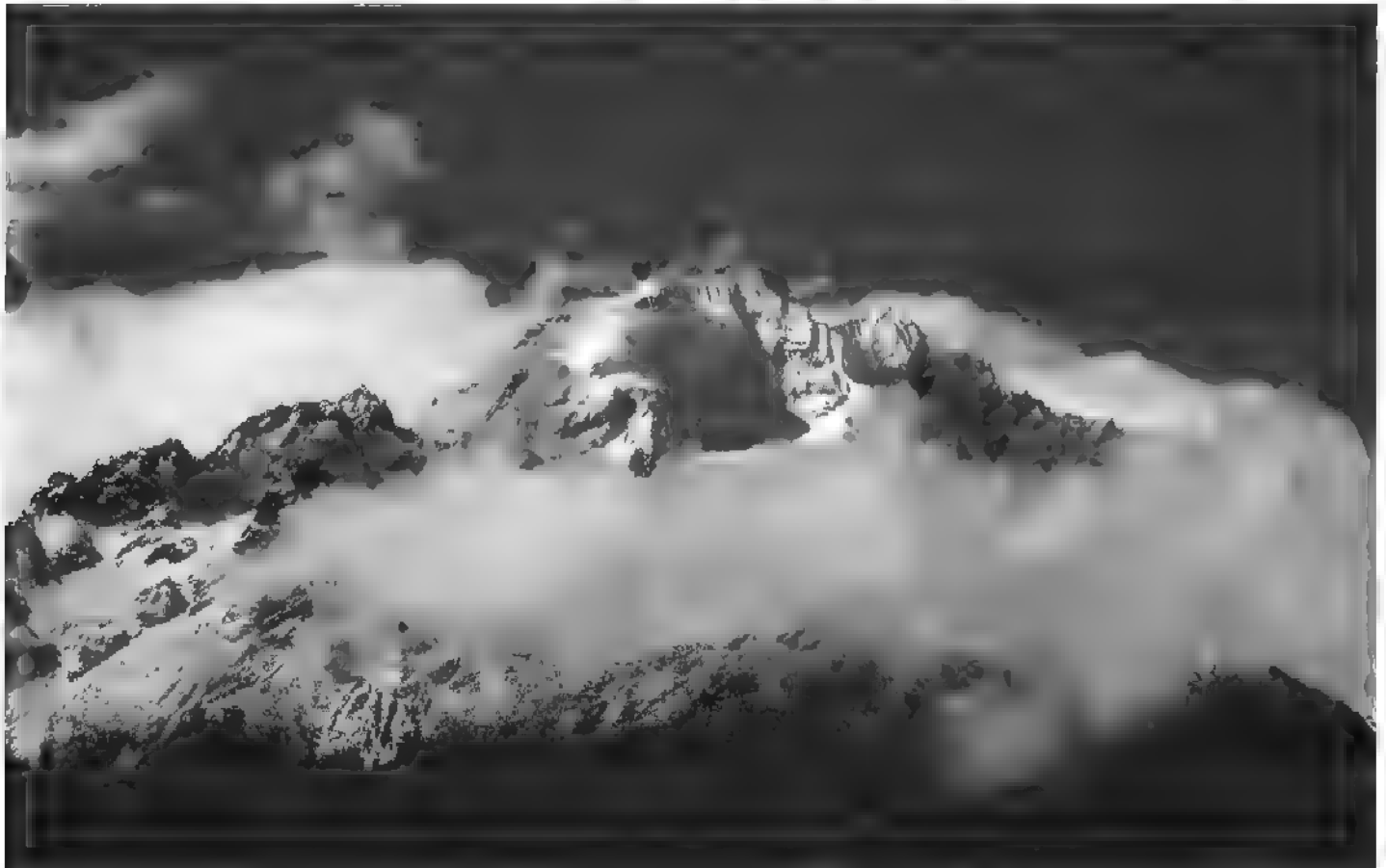
Photo by Max P. Mollr ng

Shinyung Oh  
shinyungo@yahoo.com

# High in the Himalayas

A 16,000-foot trek through Langtang National Park

Story and photos by Brianna Kirby



High clouds surround 20,958-foot Gang Chhenpo Peak in Nepal's Langtang National Park

It's been a year and a half since I hiked the Himalayas. I still feel high every time I think about it. My best friend's mother came up with the idea. She invited Anna, her friend Dave, and me on a 10-day camping trek through the Langtang region of Nepal, just south of the Tibetan border.

Since we were not physically prepared to tackle Mount Everest, and since Annapurna is more commercial, we chose Langtang National Park. Located between two of the world's mountain icons, Langtang offers a variety of landscapes and cultural experiences without the danger or the crowds.

After a week in Thailand we flew to Kathmandu. From the heart of the city, we drove through the outskirts of town on what resembled an old, stripped-down school bus to the village of Syabru-Bensi. Villagers, caged chickens, sheep and goats balanced on the rooftop rack and were packed inside









Left: A Nepali woman and her two small children emerge from their stone house in a remote region of Langtang National Park.

Top: A Langtang village schoolboy walks home after school.

Above: Children in the hillside village of Dhunche, Nepal

### **Opposite page**

Top left: A young man carries an over-size load past the Lucky Guesthouse in Langtang Village.

Top right: Street vendors sell fruit in Kathmandu's Patan Durbar Square.

Bottom Left: Mountain runoff spins three large Buddhist prayer wheels in this low, Himalayan stone structure.

the coach. Three large rusty metal cans of kerosene provided additional seating in the aisle.

As we bounced along a single lane dirt road over boulders and potholes, we became increasingly awestruck by the landscape. Eight hours later, we arrived at the Buddha Guesthouse, a modest stone structure in the middle of nowhere. We did not see another bed for 10 days. While others stayed in teahouses, we camped in tents.

We each paid \$700 for a guide, a sherpa, nine porters and a private cook. Meals and camping gear included.

Beginning at an elevation of 4,800 feet, we hiked six to 10 hours a day – from sun-up to late afternoon.

We each carried only the bare necessities – three liters of water, sunscreen, chapstick and a rain jacket. I also lugged 15 pounds of camera equipment.

Our porters shouldered most of the gear. In the morning, they each packed up to 50 kilos (110 pounds) of our food, clothes, sleeping bags, kitchenware and tents. Some went barefoot. Others trudged along in their tattered sandals. Yet every one of them made it to camp in a fraction of the time it took me in my new REI hiking boots.

They kicked our butts.

“Nearly there, nearly there,” our guide Ngawang Gurme frequently repeated. We loved his encouragement, even though “nearly” could mean three more hours of pounding.

We slogged through wind and rain. Under waterfalls, across steel suspension bridges and through forests of bamboo.

The national park is home to the red panda, langur monkey and the goat-like Himalayan tahr, as well as 4,500 Tamang villagers. Oak, birch, silver fir and juniper trees line the trails. Locals depend on the Langtang region for timber and firewood.

We trekked alongside families bringing their children home from school in Kathmandu for Dasain – a 15-day national holiday that celebrates family and community.

Two days into the trek, at 9,000 feet, a herd of grazing yaks that look like long horned, hairy buffalo blocked the trail.

Ngawang herded them out of our way, calling “Yah-yah, shu-shu!” We joined



Prayer wheels line a Buddhist place of worship in Kathmandu Valley.



Ngawang Gurme Sherpa balances a warm cup of pineapple juice on his head.





Dave Hansen, of Rancho Mirage, cautiously navigates a wooden plank bridge on the second day of his 10-day trek.

the chorus.

Each step got heavier as I climbed. My face burned from the sun and wind. The lack of oxygen at these high elevations didn't seem to faze the porters and the sherpa, but it took its toll on us. Since we didn't have a place to sleep until we reached camp, we couldn't stop.

When we thought we couldn't go any farther, one of our porters would rejuvenate us with a kettle of warm pineapple juice.

Hot meals were prepared for us three times a day. For lunch and dinner, we ate cauliflower, cheese, baked beans and "daal bhat" (Nepalese rice and lentils). Our cook also prepared pizza topped with canned tuna, and chocolate cake.

After a night's rest, we woke up to oatmeal, omelets, hot cocoa and tea. We then summoned the strength to continue our journey.

I've been camping, I've gone on stren-

uous hikes, and I've traveled around the world. But I have never done anything like this. I have never been exposed to so great a challenge and so humbling a reward.

To get up before the sun. To climb uphill over uneven terrain and through unpredictable weather...

To learn the luxury of toilet paper and a shower...

To wake up with a breathtaking view of the sunrise over a snow capped ridge...

To know trust and vulnerability, to learn true simplicity and to remember the essence of raw beauty...

To push the limits of physical exertion, to ascend 16,000 feet in five days, to be humbled by nature and by the mastery of our porters and sherpa...

To feel completely alive.

Brianna N. Kirby

[briannakirby@kirbshots.com](mailto:briannakirby@kirbshots.com)



The author along the Langtang trail

# Ticket to the inauguration

by Allan Palmer

Washington, D.C. - It's 6:00 a.m. and the temperature outside is 20 degrees. It snowed last night. After a hot shower, I slip into my Carhartt thermals, a pair of LRG jeans and a special black T-shirt I bought at Stonestown before Christmas. It's embossed with a reverse image of the 44th president of the United States on the front.

Although this isn't my first trip to the nation's capital, it is the first time I've attended a presidential inauguration. I was for Barack Obama right from the start. Considering it was the first time I'd ever voted for a president, I got lucky.

It was great seeing him win, and by such a large margin - 10 million votes.

But the real clincher came when my mom called me at a friend's house and said she had won three tickets to the inauguration in an online raffle on Nancy Pelosi's website.

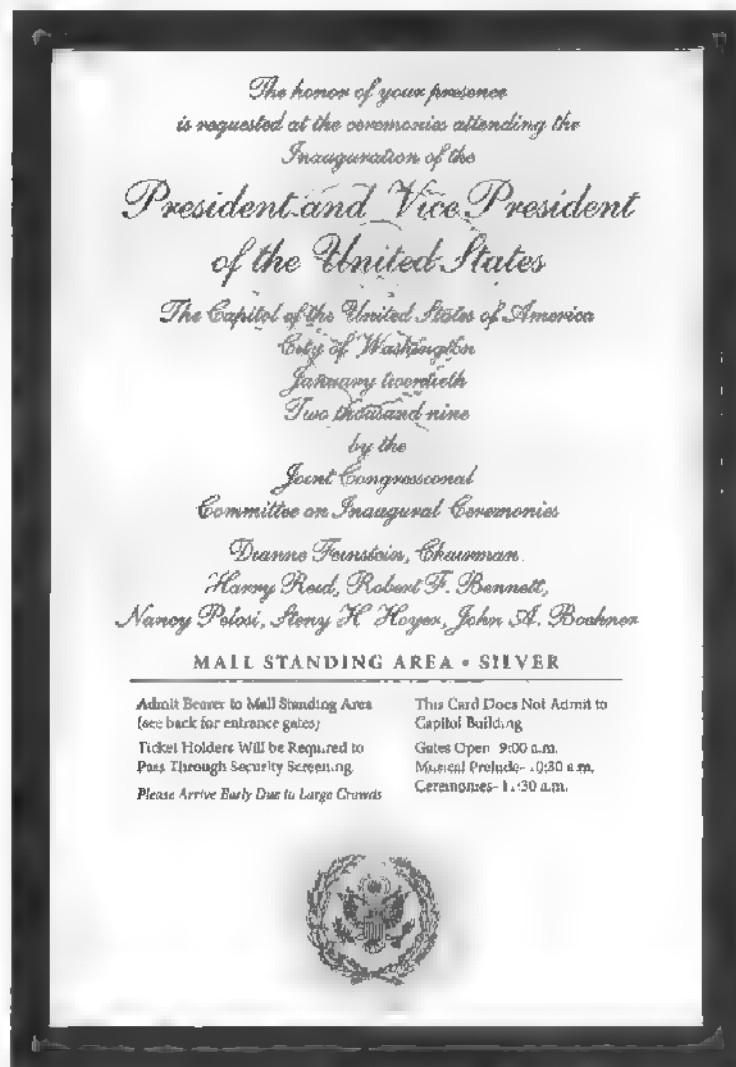
She invited my uncle and me to join her. Could you imagine?

I lace up my Nikes with insole foot warmers, zip up my down jacket and wrap a turquoise and black knit scarf around my neck under my hood before heading out the door.

The snow crunches underfoot as we walk briskly to the car. It's 1.5 miles to the Shady Grove Metro station.

You'd have to be nuts to drive into Washington D.C. today. They predict about 2.5 million people will fill the National Mall.

Arriving at Shady Grove station a few minutes before 7 a.m., there are only 60 to 70 people waiting for the train. I ask a Metro employee why it's not more crowded. He laughs and says, "Y'all are the late comers."



An empty train arrives 10 minutes later. As we enter the L'Enfant Plaza station at 8 a.m., we're instantly engulfed in a crowd. People are crammed shoulder-to-shoulder. Complete gridlock. It's a struggle to take even one step.

An hour later, the mob finally exits the Metro station at the corner of D and 7th streets. Not a cloud in the sky. Police officers direct ticket holders.

We're only three blocks from the Mall, but it will take us another 20 minutes to get to the security entrance.

As we approach the Capitol, vendors are hawking Obama souvenirs - hats, buttons, T-shirts, sweaters, watches, bumper stickers. Anything you could imagine. Hungry people are waiting in line for hot dogs. Some are frantically

rushing around, looking to skirt the crowd on their way to the Mall.

It's 9:15 a.m. and the silver ticket line - which is 11 blocks long - is not moving. We decide to bail on the line and head toward the Mall. Along with thousands of other people, we move closer and closer to the security checkpoint.

The amount of people surrounding us is staggering. Kind of like the limbaracadero on New Year's Eve.

Finally, we reach the security checkpoint. After opening my jacket, the security officer pats down my torso, then waves to the next person. I'm in.

Seventy-five hundred port-a-potties line either side of the mall, with the Washington Monument at one end and the Capitol at the other.

From our standing-room-only viewing area, we're about 300 yards from the front steps of the Capitol, where the swearing-



Photo by Allan Palmer

President Barack Obama took the oath of office on the steps of the Capitol as 2.5 million people looked on

in ceremony will take place. About a hundred billboard-sized Jumbotrons are strategically scattered throughout the mall. There's one behind us and the one in front of us is obstructed by a huge deciduous tree, with people perched in it like crows.

We manage to thread our way through the crowd, around the reflecting pool, to a position within a hundred yards of the podium on the Capitol steps. Directly behind us, people are draped over statues of Civil War heroes.

You can feel the excitement in the air. People are chanting: "O-BAM-A! O-BAM-A! O-BAM-A!"

I can see P. Diddy, Bill and Hillary Clinton, and Jay Z in the VIP seating area in front of the podium.

When Laura, Barbara, Jenna and George W. Bush are introduced, they're treated to a chorus of loud boos.

It's around 11 a.m. The scene is a sea of humanity. Flags everywhere. People bundled against the cold.

As Sen. Dianne Feinstein speaks, you can hear her voice echo down the Mall.

Aretha Franklin, dressed in a hat that looked like it came out of Queen Elizabeth's wardrobe, belts out "My Country, 'Tis of Thee." Obama, Joe Biden, Feinstein, and Nancy Pelosi look like they're enjoying the show.

It's so cold that Yo-Yo Ma's cello and Isak Perlman's violin can't stay in tune, so they "Milli Vanilli" their way through "Tis a Gift to be Simple." But we can't tell.

Finally, just before noon, Supreme Court Chief Justice John Roberts steps in front of the microphone. The crowd grows silent. With Michelle at his side, Obama takes the oath of office on Abraham Lincoln's Bible.

After the oath of office was administered, the U.S. Marine Band plays "Hail to the Chief," as cannons explode in a salute.

About 38 million television viewers watch the historic event, which falls short of the 150 million people who watched this year's Super Bowl.

Obama's 22-minute speech is awesome. I look around at the crowd and see lots of people, including my mom, in tears.

"Homes have been lost, jobs shed, businesses shattered," he says. "Our health care is too costly, our schools fail too many — and each day brings further evidence that the ways we use energy strengthen our adversaries and threaten our planet. ...

"But our time of standing pat, of protecting narrow interests and putting off unpleasant decisions — that time has surely passed. Starting today, we must pick ourselves up, dust ourselves off, and begin again the work of remaking America," he tells the crowd.

As he finishes his speech, an eruption of cheers fills the air.

Ten minutes later, the presidential helicopter lifts off with former President Bush and his wife for one last tour of Washington D.C. As they circle overhead, everyone looks up. Many salute Bush with their middle finger.

Leaving the Mall is much more of a challenge than getting here. Imagine 2.5 million people heading for the exit at the same time.

With thousands of other people we walk about three miles around the parade route to the Dupont Circle Metro station. It takes us about an hour to get to my aunt and uncle's house in Gaithersburg, Maryland.

Later that evening, during dinner, we watch the parade and evening news on TV.

It's not often that you witness history firsthand. I'm 21. Forty years from now, I'll tell my grandkids about this day.

Allan Palmer • apalmer415@yahoo.com

# Champion of the working class

## Former supervisor Jake McGoldrick adjusts to life after City Hall

by Christopher Barranti

The year was 1965. The Vietnam War was escalating. At the age of 18, Jake McGoldrick wanted to do something meaningful with his life. He even thought of becoming a priest.

"Some people have a calling for music," he says. "I like the notion of giving... helping people."

McGoldrick volunteered as a missionary lay-worker in Guatemala, while it was in the middle of a civil war. He helped build homes in the jungle with a Jesuit priest named Father Murphy.

One night, as he drove back to a village by himself, a lone figure appeared in the middle of a dirt road and blocked the truck. McGoldrick had two choices. Pull out the pistol tucked into the torn upholstery beneath the seat springs. Or punch the gas, and run the guy down.

"I quickly hit the button on the glove compartment and pulled out one of Father Murphy's collars. I put it over my T-shirt and covered up with a windbreaker."

A second man appeared and stuck a machine gun through the window. He pressed it against McGoldrick's head.

"It felt cold, the muzzle about the size of a quarter," he remembers. The first man scolded his accomplice for threatening a priest and let McGoldrick go. As he drove away, he saw 15-armed men spill out on both sides of the road.

That's the first and last time he put on a priest's collar.

But the choice he made that night would foreshadow the decisions he would later make as a professor, polyglot and politician. His unorthodox way of dealing with adversity would also shape his career.

Today, the 62-year-old former county supervisor answers the door with his 11-week-old grandson, Dylan, strapped to his chest. Hair impaired, with teary blue eyes, the two look like bookends of life.

The 5-foot-9 Philadelphia native is dressed comfortably in gray corduroy jeans, a green-plaid flannel shirt, aqua Croc sandals and white socks. He doesn't give a damn how he looks. Sucking on a pacifier, Dylan is part of his attire.

In the narrow hallway next to the playpen, McGoldrick shows off a picture of his wife, Anthea. His daughter, Lauren, 32, leaves her son Dylan with him while she teaches science at Stuart Hall, a Catholic high school in Pacific Heights. His 36-year-old son, Jamie, who pops in later for lunch, is a paramedic student at City College.

In the mid-1980s, McGoldrick taught English as a Second Language here. This fall, he will return to academia as a part-time instructor to the University of San Francisco, where he



Photo by Amy M. Mackowski

Former County Supervisor Jake McGoldrick taught English as a Second Language at City College.

will preside as president of the faculty association.

Like a lot of people his age, McGoldrick is in the middle of a career transition.

The McGoldricks began renting their Inner Richmond home some 30 years ago, when Sen. Dianne Feinstein was mayor of San Francisco.

McGoldrick, a former county supervisor and champion of affordable housing, could have owned the 1892 Edwardian by now. But property ownership is not his priority. Family is.



Leaving his 1991 Volvo station wagon parked in the driveway, McGoldrick routinely strolls with Dylan down 4th Avenue, between the Presidio golf course and Clement Street, in the Richmond. It's an area he knows well. It's the district he represented for eight years on the Board of Supervisors before he termed out in January.

In constant motion, the former Supervisor speaks in non sequiturs, switching from one subject to the next. He's more Robin Williams than Woody Allen.

"He is at least well-intentioned, if exasperating," the Examiner reported after his last board meeting. "McGoldrick spoke, and, in a final demonstration that the only language he doesn't know is brevity, addressed the Board first in French, then Spanish, and finally English."

At home, while McGoldrick tries to make a point about transportation reform, Dylan spits his pacifier across the room. Without missing a beat, McGoldrick says, "We have a long way to go. Adam and Eve got us kicked out of paradise, so here we are. We're just struggling."

McGoldrick was the second of seven children in an Irish Catholic family. He grew up in a blue-collar Philadelphia neighborhood, and he's never forgotten his roots.

His mother was a social worker and homemaker. His father, a postal worker.

But his parents struggled.

"My father was a really frustrated fellow. He drank too much. He went to work at the age of 13, didn't get a chance for an education," he said. "It wasn't unusual for his generation."

McGoldrick would take a different path from his dad. His world would revolve around education.

While in Guatemala, he received a letter from his uncle informing him that his parents had separated.

Upon returning to the States, he was offered a grant from the Christian Brothers at La Salle University in Philadelphia for the work he did in Guatemala. He soon left for Europe.

After a one-year study abroad program in Spain to learn the language, he became fluent.

The following year, he moved to Paris and found a job working with two handicapped teenagers—a brother and sister, both epileptic and mentally retarded. He spent 10 to 12 hours per day with them. The relationship became close, and he learned to speak French by reading them children's books.

"When they had seizures," he said, "they would fall down and smash their face, crush their teeth. They looked like Frankenstein's monster, poor kids."

The siblings never chipped a single tooth under his care, McGoldrick said.

He couldn't afford rent in Paris, so he squatted in an abandoned butcher shop. He later met his wife of 37 years at a Thanksgiving dinner in "the city of love."

Denied a visa to Canada, McGoldrick and his family moved to San Francisco in the mid-1970s. Eight hours after touching down, he landed a job as a roofer. Construction work enabled him to pursue his academics.

He got his bachelor's in American Studies and a master's in

Education from San Francisco State, which allowed him to teach.

Five years later, he taught his first ESL class here.

"ESL was part of the English Department back then," said longtime City College teacher Carole Glanzer, current ESL Coordinator at the Alemany campus. "Now it is one of the largest programs in the United States."

However, McGoldrick never spoke of teaching in terms of enrollment. He wanted to help immigrants integrate into the community.

As supervisor, he was most concerned about education and health care. But in the beginning, his passion was affordable housing for working families.

Under former Mayor Art Agnos, McGoldrick served on a commission to expand low-cost housing. During that period, affordable housing in San Francisco increased from 342 units to 2,240 units, which earned the city national recognition from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development.

In 2000, he was elected county supervisor of the Richmond District by a 52 percent majority. His first major legislative effort was CityBuild.

McGoldrick and Supervisor Sophie Maxwell, both rookies, launched the program. CityBuild trained unskilled residents in the construction trade.

Since September 2005, CityBuild has placed nearly 300 residents in skilled trade vocations that pay about \$18 per hour.

"There's nothing that gives you respect like bringing home a paycheck," McGoldrick said.

As a proponent of "Healthy Saturdays," he spearheaded the move to ban automobiles on JFK Drive between Crossover Drive and the Japanese Tea Garden on Saturdays.

Legislative aide Cassandra Costello remembers her former boss as a guy who could listen to opposing views and create consensus.

"You could see how his considerable life experience framed and shaped him," she said.

Today, he serves as a member on the Democratic County Central Committee with other notable affordable housing advocates, including supervisor Chris Daly.

They say you can tell the type of man by the company he keeps. McGoldrick is on a first-name basis with Senators Barbara Boxer and Dianne Feinstein, Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi and Mayor Gavin Newsom.

After recently terming out as a county supervisor, McGoldrick's options are open.

"I want to get involved in policy work. But everything is timing and position. I am capable of being mayor," he notes, "if the opportunity ever presented itself."

McGoldrick looks out through the kitchen window and reflects on life.

"You can spend \$200 dollars laying on the couch talking to somebody," he says, "or get involved with others."

Christopher Barranti • c.barranti@yahoo.com

# Smart stuff

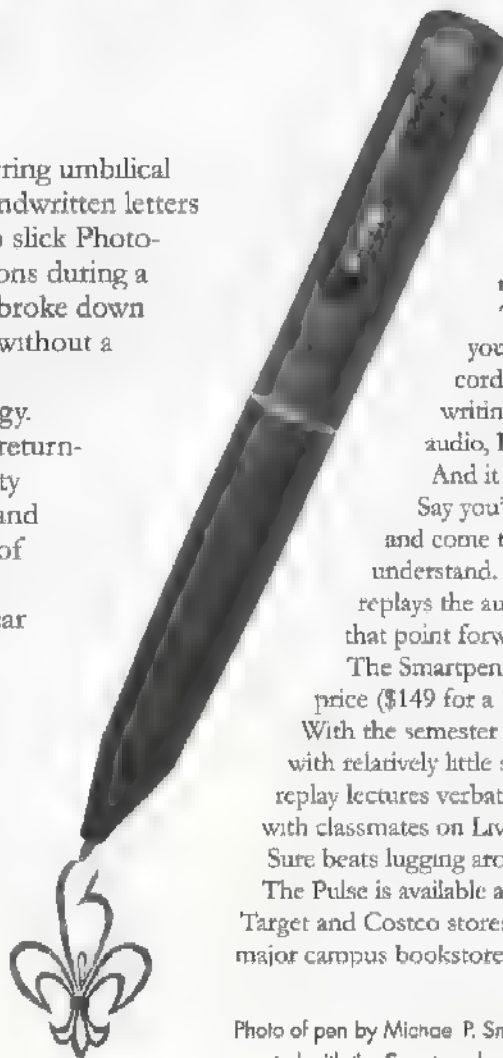
by Helena Babington Guiles

For decades, I resisted digital life, preferring umbilical landlines to ubiquitous cell phones, handwritten letters to e-mails and textured canvas paintings to slick Photoshop files. But I began rethinking the options during a cross-country move to California. My car broke down in the Mohave Desert and I was stranded without a cell.

That's when I began embracing technology. Slowly, I've caught up, byte by byte. After returning to school to study graphic design at City College last fall, I bought a 24-inch iMac and Adobe CS4 design software with the help of City College student discounts. Lately, I've even become geeky about the high tech gear I once ignored.

Living on a student's budget has caused me to become frugal when cruising this ever-expanding digital universe. One thing I've discovered is that my thin wallet doesn't have to rule out all these cool toys that can make college life easier and more fun.

Internet research led to my discovery of several digital devices that are worth every penny.



## The Smartpen

Livescribe's Pulse Smartpen is my favorite. It's received awards from PC World, MacWorld, Popular Science and Popular Mechanics. It's a quantum change in the centuries-old relationship between pen and paper. The pen is capable of digitizing your handwriting. It simultaneously records audio and synchronizes it to your writing. When I inconspicuously record audio, I feel like Agent 007.

And it has huge student appeal.

Say you're studying lecture notes for a test and come to a concept you don't completely understand. Simply tap on a word, and the pen replays the audio recording of the lecture from that point forward.

The Smartpen is irresistible, particularly at the price (\$149 for a 1GB pen kit or \$199 for 2GB).

With the semester almost over, I have aced every test with relatively little study time, thanks to my ability to replay lectures verbatim. I also share these "Pencasts" with classmates on Livescribe's website.

Sure beats lugging around a laptop.

The Pulse is available at [Livescribe.com](http://Livescribe.com) and [Amazon.com](http://Amazon.com), Target and Costco stores nationwide, as well as over 100 major campus bookstores.

Photo of pen by Michael P. Smith. Line drawing created with the Smartpen by Helena Babington Guiles.

## Pocket camera cameo

As a design student, I need a broad range of digital equipment. Next on my list: a digital camera/camcorder. High definition pocket video cams are now within my \$200 price range. These pocket cams perfectly combine portability and low cost. However, they have potential glitches and limitations.

Compared to high-end HD camcorders, many helpful features have been removed, resulting in such drawbacks as camera shake, poor low-light capability and distracting audio background noise.

The huge size of HD files and the lack of a file for

mat standard can be even more problematic.

Donna Eyestone, my Electronic Media Arts instructor, advises nonprofessional media makers to avoid HD video cameras right now.

"What I do recommend is that people buy a camera that works with their system. Check the technical specs of the camera. Compare them to the input specs on their (computer) video editor. Then buy from there."

Given Eyestone's recommendation, I am going to wait. Once there is a standard format, I plan to buy the most compatible pocket HD camcorder/camera combo.



## All-in-one: PIXMA MX 850

A less sexy, but more essential device is the multifunction printer/copier/scanner/fax all-in-one.

Though some printers are relatively inexpensive, their capabilities are limited. However, Canon's PIXMA MX 850 is perfect for students with low budgets but high standards.

The MX850's list of features would fill a Pulse Smartpen page – high-resolution, five-color printer, high-quality scanner and copier, fax capability, and digital camera memory-card slots. The speedy MX850 is also affordable at \$200.

One complaint is that the software isn't user-friendly. And Canon's online resources and phone tech support couldn't answer my questions about changing settings for standard print color modes. Another complaint: its paper feed only accommodates 8½-inch widths.

However, the many positives of this multifunction workhorse far outweigh its negatives.



Photo by Amy M. Mackowski

## The Kindle: a hand-held library

Fifteen hundred books take up a lot of space. But not on a Kindle. At eight inches by five inches, size does matter and could save a lot of trees. Amazon's breakthrough e-book can download titles in less than 60 seconds from anywhere on its Sprint-based network.

It's been referred to as the iPod of books, but unlike an iPod, the Kindle doesn't need an Internet connection or computer.

Despite my love of all things green, it has taken me quite a while to accept a virtual rendition of the bound book. I'd miss its tactile pages and new-book smell.

However, I have to admit, the Kindle has pizzazz.

The new Kindle 2, released earlier this year, is thinner than an iPhone. It has a crisper black-and-white display, turns pages faster and holds a longer charge than the previous version. Text-to-speech is another cool feature.

The Kindle's value to students seems obvious. But it doesn't have much of a textbook selection. Imagine the appeal once it does. Textbook costs would come down and it would lighten your load.

With access to 260,000 book titles, scores of international newspapers, magazines and blogs, the Kindle is the bomb – whether you take it on a trip or into a classroom.

Products such as these make it possible for students to plug in. For many of us, the digital divide is narrowing.

**Helena B. Guiles • [helena@babingtonarts.com](mailto:helena@babingtonarts.com)**

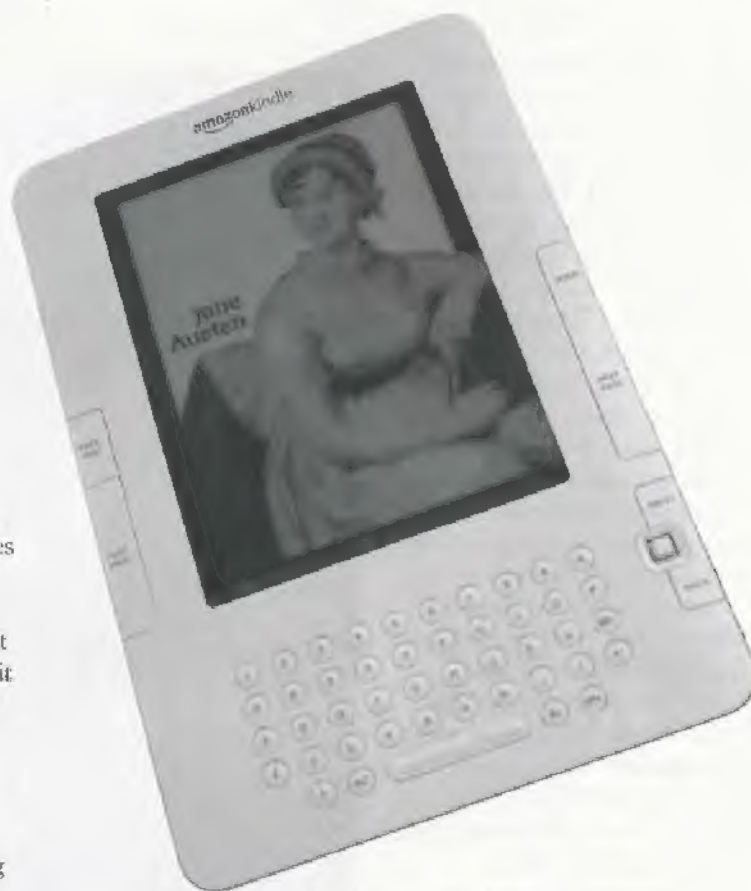


Photo by Amy M. Mackowski



# Into the heart of Africa

continued from page 17

and skulls stacked on tables. Flowers lay on some of the dead.

In the fourth classroom, I have to stop. The room's filled with the remains of small children, their heads bashed in, their bodies contorted, frozen in screams with their hands covering their faces.

The tour guide picks up a tiny body by the neck, like a relic void of life. Overwhelmed, I break down. I have seen enough.

Twenty minutes down a dirt road, a group of smiling children from a village come running up to me. Their clothing is dirty and torn. But they're alive and well.

Sitting among Hutu and Tutsi on the bus ride back to the hotel, we pass a sign as the sun goes down, reading: "Genocide No More."

By noon the next day, I'm sitting in a lounge chair by a pool overlooking the city at the famed Hotel Des Mille Collines. It's the real "Hotel Rwanda," upon which the movie was based. The movie, however, was filmed in South Africa. But it was here in 1994 that hotel manager Paul Rusesabagina, a Hutu, sheltered more than 1,200 people from armed Hutu outside its gated compound.

Rwanda is a powerful place, mostly made up of young people striving to overcome a tainted past.

## Congo

Most of the Democratic Republic of the Congo is jungle — the second largest on the planet, with much of it impenetrable and unexplored. The Virunga Mountain, made up of eight major volcanoes, straddles the borders of the Congo, Uganda, and Rwanda — home to the remaining mountain gorillas.

Goma, the Congo's second largest city, shares its border with Rwanda and Lake Kivu. Along the lake's coastline are beautiful hotels that accommodate U.N. peacekeepers and foreign visitors. But inland, it's a different story.

Much of Goma is still covered in molten lava left from a volcanic eruption in 2002. More than 25,000 of its residents were displaced. People fleeing their homes overwhelmed refugee camps. Straw huts the size of SUVs, covered in white plastic with U.N. logos, still provide shelter.

There are more than 17,000 U.N. peacekeepers in the Congo — 12,000 in Goma alone. It is the

largest U.N. peace-keeping mission in the world.

Most villages don't have running water. Food is scarce. People travel for miles to Lake Kivu returning with five-gallon yellow water jugs on their backs. Some locals fit six to eight jugs on their bikes.

Women dressed in colorful mismatched garments and flip-flops saunter past with heavy loads on their heads. They carry baskets and plastic tubs the size of TVs, laden with produce, laundry and coal.

Men in tattered clothing haul large sacks of sugarcane on their backs. Somber souls, resolute faces, hardened bodies. They do the best they can to survive. Despite their burdens, they're friendly, gracious and gladly share what they have.

## Tanzania

The island of Zanzibar, better known as the Spice Islands, is a three-hour ferry ride from Tanzania's mainland. It's the last country on my itinerary.

In the middle of the Indian Ocean, the island is surrounded by white sandy beaches and palm trees. The old town's white-washed stone buildings and narrow, cobbled streets feature arts, crafts and spice shops.

Here for a little R&R before heading home, I stroll along the beach in my sundress, reflecting on the past nine weeks. After a couple of fruit-garnished cocktails, I swim in the warm ocean. The sunset glistens on the water, silhouetting small boats against the orange sky.

My last supper — at a luxury hotel, is divine. My table overlooks the moonlit Indian Ocean. Musicians play wind instruments of romantic African music. I dine on barracuda just because it sounds exotic. After two glasses of wine, I'm in bliss.

The journey back to Nairobi is a blur. I have a day to pack.

Sunday morning I fly to London. Two days later, I'm home in San Francisco. I drop my dirty backpack at the door and race up the stairs to my flat in the Inner Richmond, where my anxious mother embraces me.

Back at work the next day, I hardly have time to take in the meaning of all that I experienced.

It's been a year since my journey, and Africa is still with me. It's a place that never leaves you.

I went to Africa seeking answers. What I found was people like me with dreams of their own.

**Lynda Brommage**

lyndabrommage@yahoo.com



Tourists sail toward the sunset near Zanzibar, an island in the Indian Ocean off the coast of Tanzania.





etc.  
magazine

We're searching for:

writers • editors • photographers • designers

JOURNALISM 29 • MAGAZINE EDITING & PRODUCTION

Mondays 6:30 pm to 8:30 pm   Mission Campus   415.920.6044   [www.theguardian.com/etcmain.html](http://www.theguardian.com/etcmain.html)





etc.  
magazine

CITY COLLEGE OF SAN FRANCISCO • SPRING 2009